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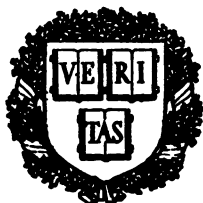
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by GEORGES LEWYS

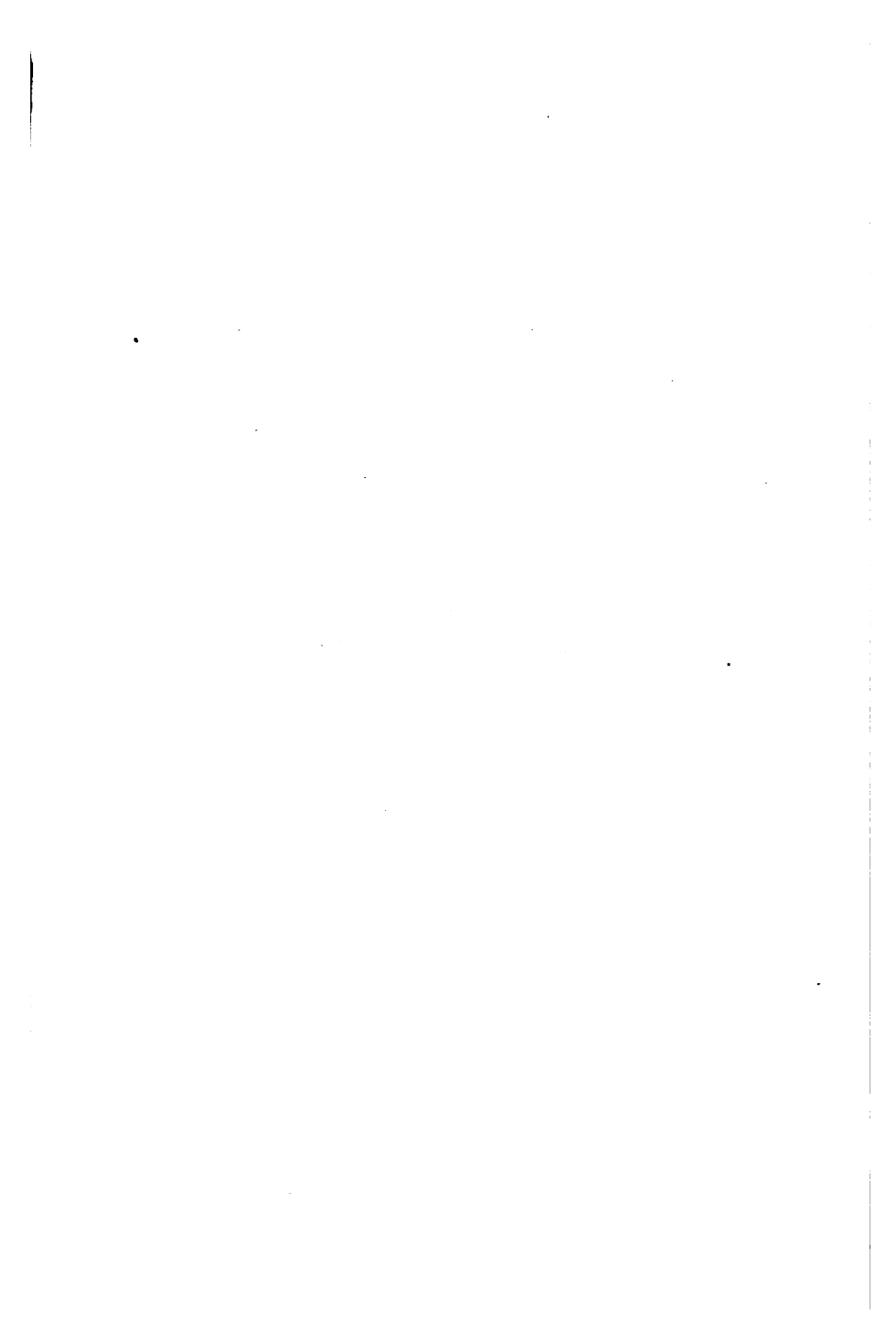
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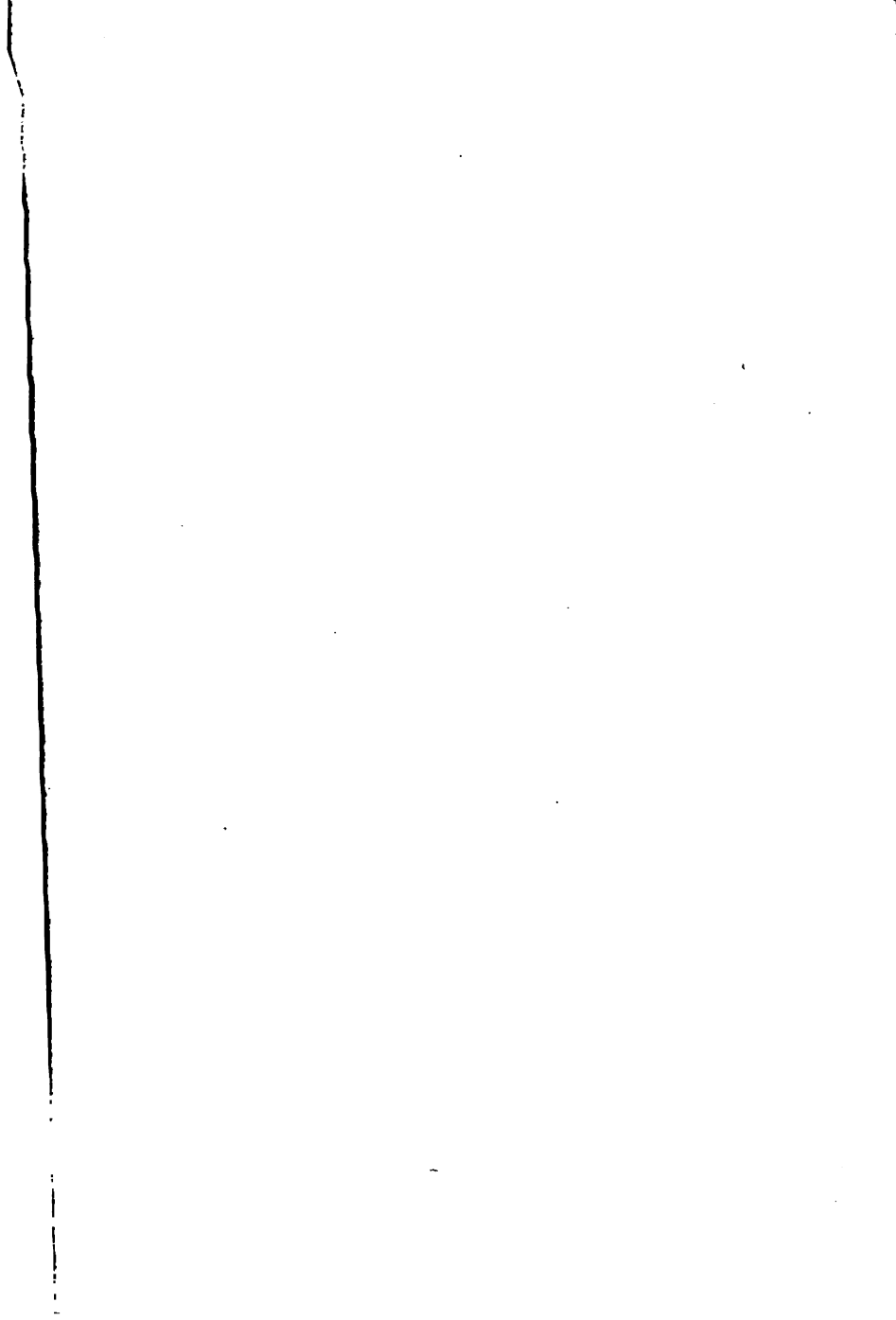
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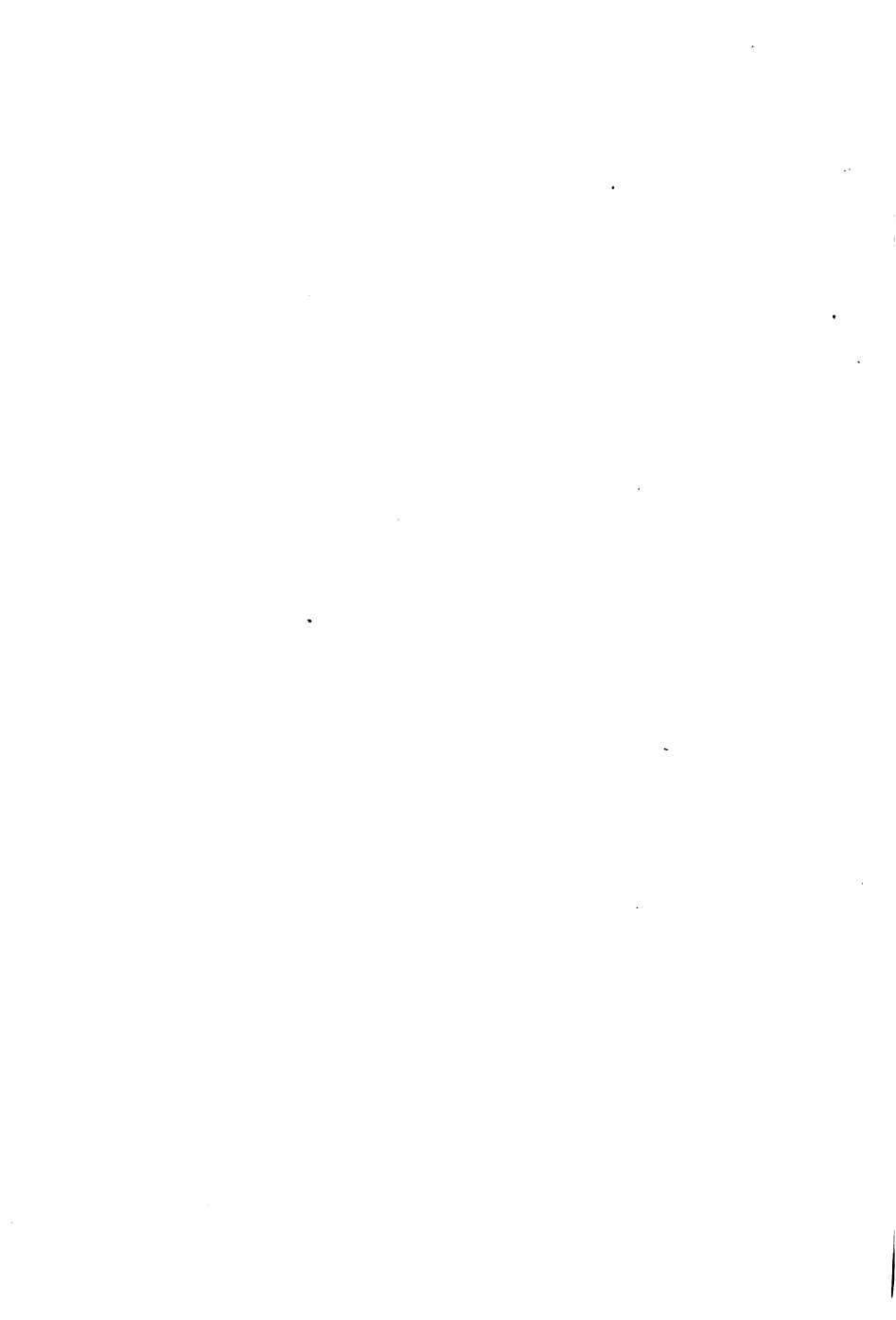


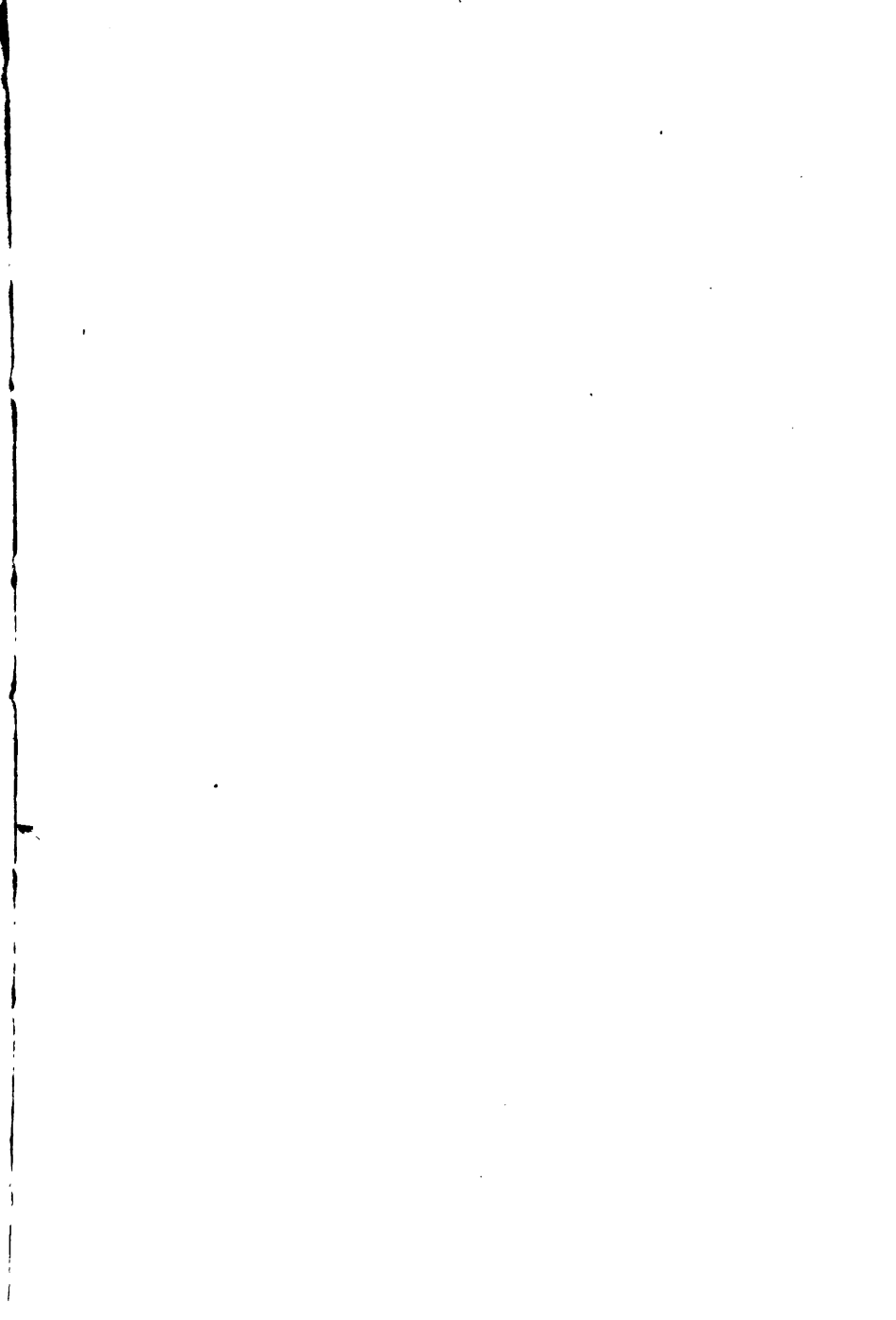
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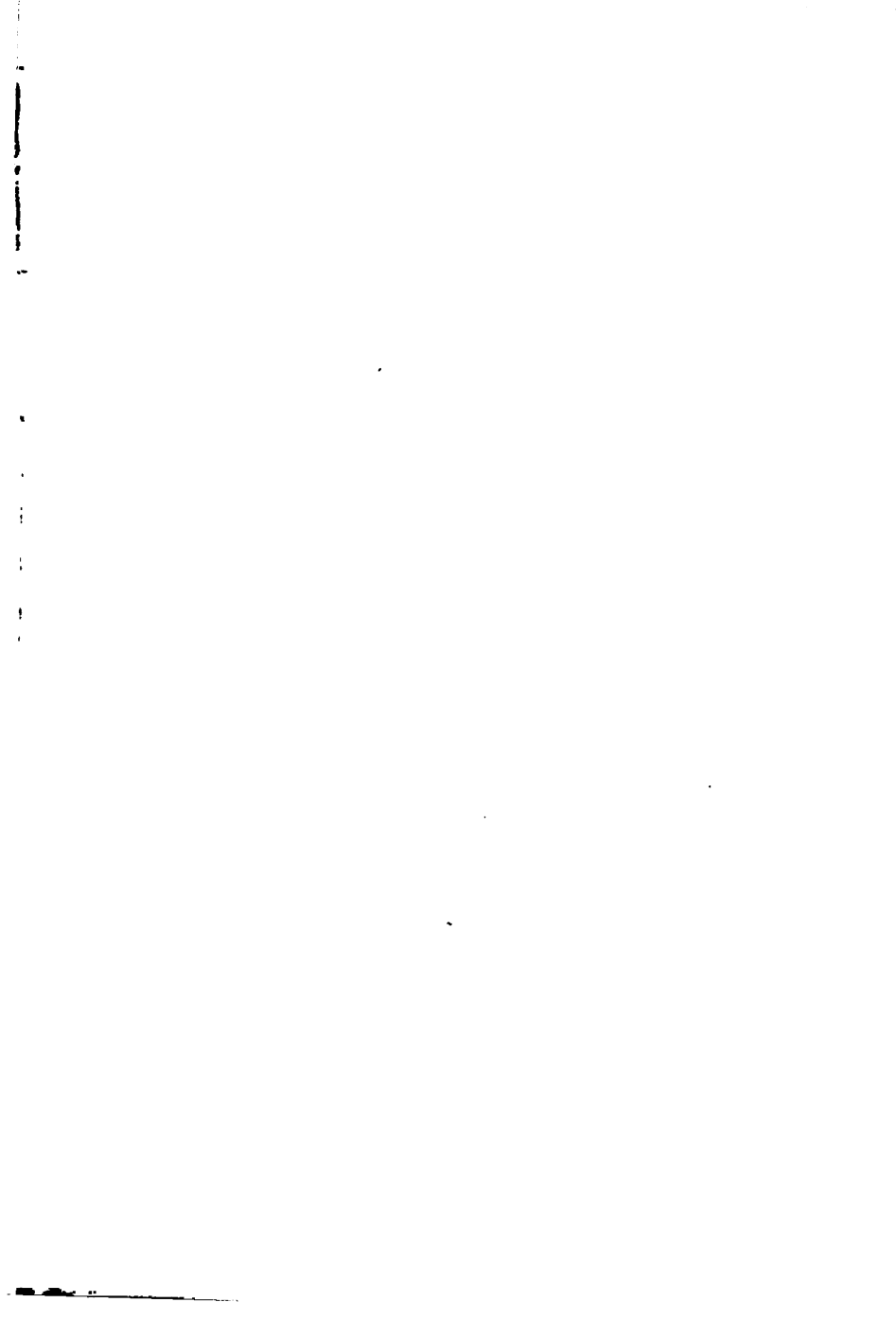
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## THE "CHARMED AMERICAN"

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## BURGUNDY

*Siegel*  
*Krupps roaring, belching death—*  
*Flanders—Burgundy—sucking, feeding on bloodshed;*  
*Manhood's breath*  
*red,*  
*like blood-fed*  
*Burgundy, wed*  
*to murdered Liège . . .*  
*Further siegel—*  
*Turmoil . . .*  
*Burgundy's soil*  
*saturated with bubbling gore;*  
*and craving more—*

*Luscious grapes,*  
*Rich, ripe, swelling from the vine,*  
*Harvested for wine*  
*to crash down the throats of maddened throngs—*  
*Then songs*  
*And more rich, red wine—a crimson sea,—*  
*Laughter—cries—the twitch of*  
*sodden throats—mad jubilee!—*  
*Women carmine-lipped—white*  
*bosomed men—tongues set free*  
*In amorous jest and ribaldry*  
*On streaming blood-red Burgundy—*



FRANÇOIS,  
"L'AMÉRICAIN"

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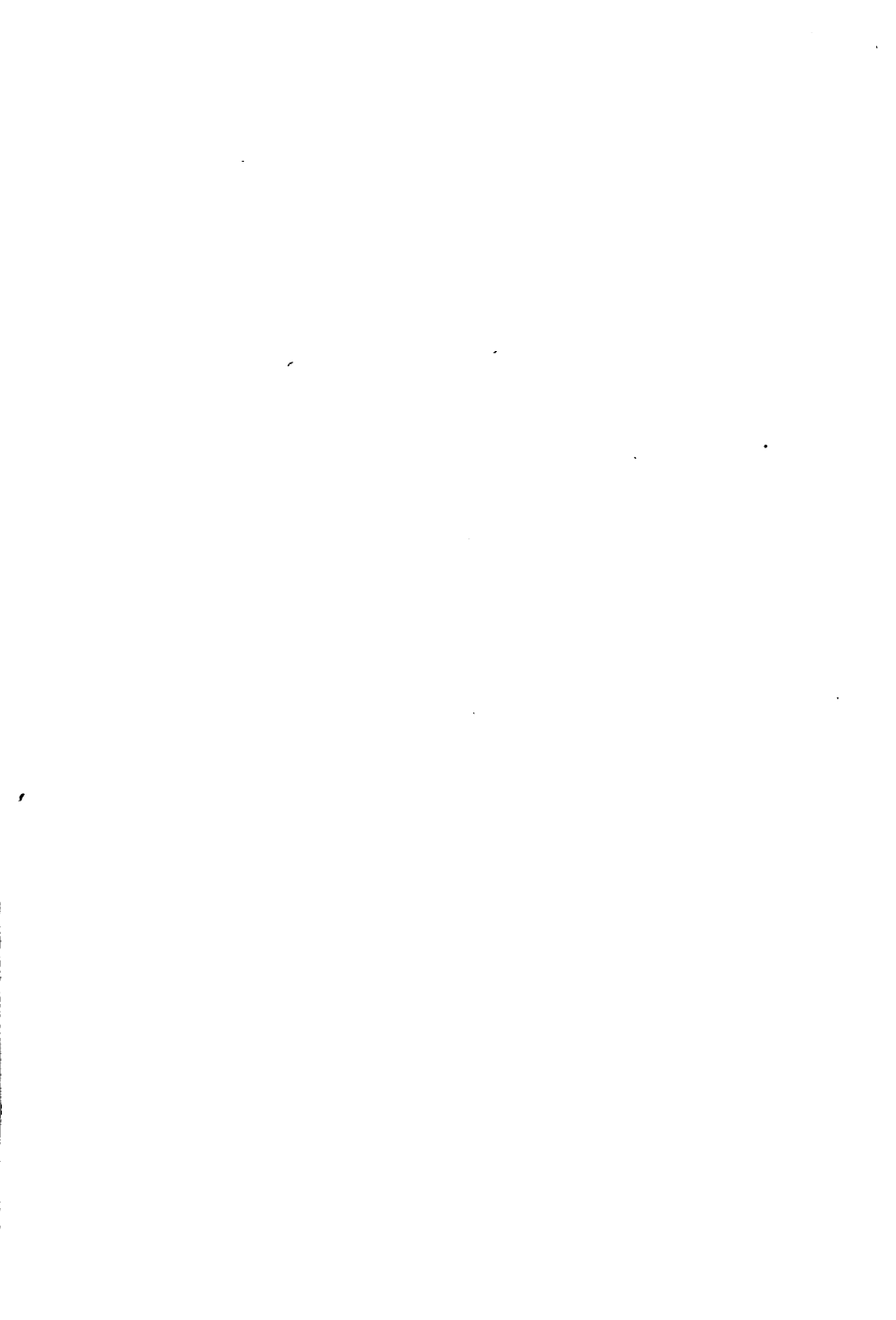
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**GEORGES LEWYS'**  
**THE**  
**"CHARMED AMERICAN"**  
*(François, l'Américain)*

A Story of  
**THE IRON DIVISION OF FRANCE**



**NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY**  
**LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD**  
**MCMXIX**



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# THE "CHARMED AMERICAN"

## I

### THE IRON DIVISION OF FRANCE

**T**HERE is a tradition since 1870—or it may be more in the nature of things to call it a belief, and to say that it *was* rather than *is*—that should France know attack from Germany, that attack would be launched along the almost impregnable yet convenient boundary known as the Eastern Frontier. The latter may be said to extend from Luxembourg in the North to Switzerland in the South, forming a border along those rather mournful provinces, Alsace and Lorraine.

Along this frontier, then, has been assembled since the memorable surrender, a galaxy of troops at various points, garnered from the Meurthe et Moselle Regions, the Aube, the Haute Marne, the Meuse, the Seine (which includes Paris),—the entire district East, in fact. They have been headquartered in two divisions of presumably fifteen thousand souls each in the cities of Toul and Nancy respectively, and have therefore adopted these names: the "*Division de Fer de Toul*," the 39th, and the "*Division de Fer de Nancy*," the 11th, composing collectively, and with the aid of an extra regiment of field artillery, therefore, the 20th *Corps d'Armée* of the Republic of France.

Now, it is a well-known fact that when the actual attack was made upon French soil it was launched from an entirely fresh point, which is to say, through Belgium, and the Eastern Frontier ignored as if that were not after all the point in question as far as *Franco revenge* burned, and

upon which it was hoped the ultimate victory would be staged.

The Germans came in from the North. The proceeding was made upon Paris, the bolt shot, the lines established, and France's Iron Division—the Western "Watch on the Rhine," as it were—withdrawn and thrown into the fray wherever it waxed hottest, whether in Ypres, Arras, the Champagne, Verdun, the Somme, the Aisne, or Lorraine.

But in order to give an idea of the actual fighting of this unit, it might be well to review its history and to see why it was that Verdun cried with the death-sweat on her brow and the rattle in her throat for succor from the Teuton hordes, and received her response and her deliverance at the hands of the 20th Corps.

In each country,—as in each brigade, or company,—will be found men who have it in them to bear their lives charmed on their sleeves, yet oblivious to danger; gallant, self-sacrificing, indomitable; who dare before they do and do before they think; who never count the cost unless it be in enemy losses; who forge to the front only to present their front to the forge; who own "*Patria*" and disown self-aggrandisement, stepping into the breach with iron nerve and iron courage and iron fortitude and iron determination to work and win a position in the sun or go down in the furnace of a shell; but always responsive and dependable and determined and resolved.

Of such stuff is the Iron Division,—whether it be the Prussian Guard in the east of Germany or the Franco unit in the east of France. And of such stuff are we holden to hear in the pages of this chronicle of a simple French soldier, who left security, peace and the citizenship of a great, free country, the mist-dimmed eyes and ennobling arms of a wife, clinging hands of two small children, for the call from afar—over a period of ten years reserve soldiery, in his duty to France and the French nation, and to the cherished ideals of his compatriots—the honour and

splendour of a divisional name that is best explained by service and devotion.

We do not seek to embellish the tale by one jot of added sentiment or pathos. The tragedy is too vividly impressive to enlarge or draw unto by either exaggeration, over-statement or lie. We review events through native eyes, with the Frenchman's idea of beauty distorted into a phantasmagoria more horrible to conceive than the workings of Dante; yet is ever the subtlety of humour and of wholesomeness crowning the tale of morbidia.

The Iron Division has been the battering-ram for every offensive projected thus far along the Western Front. The troops of this corps have brunted, stabbed at, and been hunted down by the Teutons, and they have borne themselves as reserve force can best be borne, resistful to the uttermost, exalted in the extreme.

François Xavier tells us he knew training from his twentieth year through the most rigid soldiery a man can undergo, imbibing from the outset the responsibility of this extraordinary division; fatiguing himself deliberately to endure the hardships of life; drilling, training, studying, fortifying, ay! crucifying his very soul upon the cross of Alsace, to redeem for country and name that smirch which 1870 "hath cast up." He marched and counter-marched, stepped-to-toe with the rest of his valiant mates, too few of which, alas, remain from the orgy of Hades. They were wrought through early 1900 into a fighting band inferior to none on earth. They were to be rods of iron to withhold the advance of foe, to promulgate the doctrines of a reunited "Mulhouse" and "Metz" with French rule.

Under these conditions it is not difficult to see why freedom, home and family should weigh lightly in the scale against "*Patria*." How a régime of peace could find exchange in the heart of a man, deliberately and without ulterior aim, for a lust of blood and ultra-savagery defying Purgatory itself.

François is a mild-mannered, typical French patriot, with the high cheek-bones and low forehead of his race, and

the high aims and deep sensibilities of his fathers before him. He knows only that he has his God to be thankful for that he has passed through the inferno and returned unto his own in safety, that there are succeeding trench-watches and midnight sallies and deeds of horror to be gone through with wherein his senses as much, or more, than his limbs, must remain to him or usefulness to the "*Patria*" be blasted forever; and his heart, he tells me, throbs high with the greatness of Providence and humble in the face of the bounty of Him who has preserved him thus far unto his duty.

## II

### PREAMBLE

**I**N preparing the events up to and beyond the time when the patriot, François Xavier, actually saw service in the trenches of France, it is with an eye to abridging the details for the benefit of such of the readers as wish to travel at the earliest possible moment into the labyrinth of Flanders.

To pass over this introductory, then, we will say that François found parturition close to the borders of Alsace. He did his ordinary schooling, following the foot-steps of an older brother up to this point, and meriting assignment to the *Division de Fer de Toul* in his twentieth year. For three years he laboured under iron leadership, brought his gun to present and clicked his heels exactly as fifteen hundred other young men in his regiment. They were gruelled in the practice of arms, sinewed and hardened.

After three years he received his papers, which is to say—his release, having been in the standing army of his country during the necessary period, and carried himself off—a reservist—onto foreign soil. He married in France. He went to England. He engaged in business. He presented himself regularly to his consul,—had his "*Livret Militaire*" viséed. He came to America—spent his time industriously and profitably between New York and San Francisco, settled finally in the latter city and took out his first American Citizenship Papers.

He was a free man in a free country, free to go when or where he pleased regardless of Alsace or Lorraine or Prussia or any of the petty quarrels or enormous schemings of the bureaucrats or diplomatists of another country. He saw before him—American liberty!

And now a strange thing happened:

On the day François was to put in his appearance for his second papers and to make himself literally as well as ostensibly an American citizen—the war broke out! He was stunned!

He thought: "What shall I do?"

And the answer came: "Go!"

"But I have wife and family!" he protested, equally in his mind.

"That is no matter. It is the Iron Division calls you—the new France, your country! . . ."

"My country?"

"Your country. *Vive la Patrie!*"

He took his head in his hands, very much troubled. His wife sat across and gazed at him, but she did not speak. She was allowing him to settle it for himself.

"—The children?" he gasped finally.

She lay her hand on his.

"If it is your wish, François, to fight for France, in God's name—go!"

The tears rushed to his eyes.

He repaired without further delay to the consulate. There was a remarkable, eager throng outside the building, all speaking in his native language, and it did his spirit good and seemed in keeping with the day. But the order had come from Washington that no further men were to transship at that moment, if, indeed, at all! It was the general opinion the war would not over-reach six months.

In the street he encountered several of his friends. Most of these were naturalised American citizens.

One of them grumbled: "What do we want to go for, and be killed for? We are not Frenchmen any longer."

This started a general discussion. Their voices became raised and argumentative. "Tell us, François,"—they shouted,—"*Do you intend to go and be butchered too?*"

The patriot blushed and stammered. He was still a Frenchman. He hesitatingly said: "My father is old and I may never see him again. Besides,—my mother is not

well, and my brothers are at the front. Who knows what will be left? No, I must go!" . . .

They were all very silent. Finally the first grumbler said: "He is right. Those of us who have homes and families in the zone ought to go. It may be as he says—for the last time." Which shows he did not get the patriot's idea at all, but was considering merely the selfish end of everything.

Men are very few with the exalted ideas of François. He placed his country—the land of his birth—alongside the pedestal of his God, and there was content to worship and to sacrifice to make holy the ideals of his youth.

Very soon the police came in a body and dispersed the throng before the consulate.

François went home. Weeks passed. He was sent on an errand out of the city. On his return his wife was waiting for him at the depot. She immediately apprised him:

"The reservists are leaving for the front to-morrow. You have not much time."

His heart leaped.

"My dear," he said, "there is no doubt about it—the war will be over by Christmas and I will be with you again. Take good care '*mes enfants*' in the meantime and rest assured the good God will protect me. He does not overlook His children." He signed up the following day and embarked with one hundred and nine others for New York.

It was then the 19th of September, 1914. The special troop-train, gathering up French reservists all the way, arrived in the metropolis, where the steamship *Chicago* was tied to the wharf of the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*. Aboard they went. Reinforced by soldiers from British Columbia, Alaska, and all parts of Canada, about 350 men stood together when the steamer swung out from her pier.

A cold wind, indicative of October advancing, fled up the Narrows and over the Battery Wall. Manhattan's skyline diminished; the Statue flared in the background. The voyage proceeded without incident until five o'clock. They

were then halted by an English patrol. She sent out a boarding-party and a rigid inspection of every man aboard resulted.

After this the sea became rough. The reservists were sick to a man. François, himself uncomfortable, took compassion and helped one of their number across the deck. A mountainous wave caught the ship on her counter, tipping her nose into the brine, and he slid against a stanchion and twisted his ankle in great shape. Here was an unlucky stroke at the very outset. On the 8th of October they swept into Le Havre with the weather clear and warm and the sky very blue.

All proceeded to the office of the *Commandant de la Place*. François was assigned to his loved Iron Division, to his former regiment, and told off to the depot at Cosne, Department of the Nièvre.

His description of his first entrance into Paris is graphic:

"It was the 9th of October, 1914. Von Kluck had made his memorable dash and had been dashed back. The fresh-stacked earth of breathless trenches, thrown up during that hourly persistence of the Teuton Machine and its swarming up to the very gates, was still in outline before the fortifications. Bridges, tunnels and gates along the route had their stiff guards—the *Armée Territoriale*, which is men between the ages of forty and forty-eight. Within three miles of Paris red-panted veterans of the reserve, all the way from thirty to forty years, were in manœuvres, prancing their flaming legs across the flat, yellow soil, dark blue coats buttoned back and *kepis* rakishly red.

"Our smoky train persisted on Paris, rocking and hobbling at times quite painfully. It dove between the fortifications, rattled into *Gare St. Lazare*; we made haste to dismount and stretch out the legs.

"Here was the same Paris, with little change save that shops and restaurants were closed in most instances with small cardboard placards before the door bearing the slogan: '*Fermé pour cause de mobilisation!*' Theatres were suspended and the street traffic appeared not up to the usual

flood. I boarded a tramway and paid my two sous to a woman-conductor. She advised me that the rule was becoming universal—in the *metro*\* as well as the surface lines, and that motormen and rear guards were affected.

"The *Gare du Nord* and *Gare de L'Est* were reserved entirely for the soldiery at this time, the civilian population being restricted to the others. Before the *Journal* offices a great crowd congregated and read the bulletins and passed desultory remarks.

"At the *Bureau de la Place* in the *Invalides* I had my papers looked over and countersigned by a lieutenant from the Staff,—a fat, puffing official in the still customary, and antedated, red pants. I was assigned to the 156th Infantry, and transferred to Cherbourg, where the fleet anchored and the city swarmed with bluejackets. Most of the shops were doing a rushing business. The colonial troops congregated here: Algerian *Tirailleurs* with blue-green, oriental fezzes; *Zouaves* in red and blue, and snow-white gaiters, bearded, swarthy faces and flashing eyes, their turbans piled high, ultra-picturesque. There was a horde of sea-infantrymen with anchors on their *kepis*, in navy-blue uniforms.

"I passed among these for four days, the rain pelting down in heavy dolorous manner. Then came an order from the *Ecole Militaire* to shift to Guingamp in the Bretagne, which is distinctly in the western part of France, and from here back to Paris, on the 29th of October, to the *Bureau de la Place*."

Having a short space in which to shift for himself, then, the patriot continued over to Rosny sous Bois to discover, if possible, his family. Rosny is only ten minutes out of Paris. Already the grim angel had swept and left his seal. With a heavy heart François heard of the death of his older brother on the firing line in Flanders. His father was also dead! His second brother was wounded somewhere on the Aisne.

He bade his aged mother a tearful farewell and started

\*Subway.

once more for the city. There was nothing further save to repair to his depot at Cosne.

It seems that the 156th Infantry was quartered at Bannay, an insignificant village not more than a couple of kilometres from Cosne. On his arrival the patriot set out for Bannay on foot and presented himself to the *major du cantonnement*. He was cross-questioned,—his destination, name, age and occupation all coming in for a series of comments, and, still in civilians after three weeks on French soil, he stood back to receive his commands.

A clerk swept a rapid eye over his papers. He seemed suspicious of this stranger. François shifted from foot to foot, casting down his eyes. He thought perhaps there was some fault to find, and in his anxiety, trembled.

To a side wall proceeded the petulant official and tore down the map of France that was hanging, embellishing the room. He spread it out on his desk and, scanning with a pencil, passed over its surface. At times he consulted the *Livret* in his hand with a puzzled expression. This continued,—for hours, it seemed to the tortured candidate. The sweat stood out on his brow. What if they should reject him? . . .

"*Monsieur le Major*," he said, addressing himself to the highest official directly, "I have come all the way from America. . . ."

The official looked up sharply.

"You are American?"

"*Mais, oui, certainement!*"

The eyebrows of the other went up. "Ah!" he said, "San Francisco was not on the map." He indicated the French terrain. François saw it all in a flash. He started to laugh, and said:

"Consult the map of the United States, *m'ssieu's*; you will see San Francisco. It is a little from France I will admit."

The *major du cantonnement* understood now and joined in the mirth. After this he questioned the patriot, looking upon him with a great deal of respect as having been in America:

"Tell me, have you seen any automobiles there?"

"How are the red-skins? . . . the cowboys?"

"Can you safely go through the streets?"

"What kind of girls?"

"Are the people all rich?"

"Can you walk from New York to San Francisco?"

And a hundred other questions of similar nonsensical trend, which goes to prove exactly how ill-read these higher-class army men are.

François was sent to the 32nd Company. The young men of the *Classe 14* were training in the enclosure of a farm, trampling the lately-reaped fields and breaking the brown stalks off short.

He was given the regulation red pants and blue coat and *kepi*, and herded among the others, so you could not tell *François l'Américain* from any one of France's less travelled sons.

On the 26th of November, the cold weather having set in and large detachments of the *Classe 14* departing for the front, the depot was moved from Bannay to Decize.

Fatigued from inaction and anxious to take a hand in the fray at any point, the patriot volunteered for duty in the Dardanelles, but was held back until February of 1915.

On the night of the 7th François was called over to the office of his lieutenant, who grilled him in this wise:

"Are you in good health? Are you willing to go to the front? Is there any reason—family or otherwise—why you should not depart at once?"

Now, he probably referred to a dependency, which was in this case a wife and small children in America. The consulate was providing for these dependents according to the French custom, and they were receiving exactly twenty-four dollars per month. François, however, familiar with the high cost of living, had prepared a small income, and this—along with their apportionment—sufficiently provided the family's needs.

It may be questioned why no provision was made out of the salary of the soldier, French soldiers receive no

salary. Up until the commencement of the war, one cent each per day was the rule of the Republic for her defenders, and it was not until sixteen months afterward that the law was revoked and a new clause inserted which raised to the glorious amount of five cents the individual pay of a first-line soldier for blood-letting from dawn until the following dawn.

The *poilu* is supposed to serve in the interests of brotherhood and home, for the conservation of the natural resources and municipality of his *patrie*; and no finer example of native devotion is existent than that which obtains under the new Republic.

Therefore François disclaimed any hindrances and once more offered himself a frank and free soldier for the firing line. With others he was outfitted, and on the 11th entrained and deployed for the front.

It might be well to explain what is meant by "outfit" in the French use of the word:

Fresh clothing from head to heels.

Rifle and bayonet, a simultaneous weight of ten pounds.

One hundred and fifty cartridges, swollen to 250 in the trenches.

Tent-cloth.

A heavy blanket.

An extra shirt.

Underwear.

Soap.

Towels.

Handkerchiefs.

Shoes.

Canned meats, two pounds.

Sugar and coffee.

Condensed soups.

Brushes.

Cooking utensils.

Trench tool, either pick or shovel.

Innumerable small articles furnishing any ordinary comfort-kit.

For a man without army routine for ten years, this was an unconscionable load. François describes it:

"All at once the whole shooting-match was put upon my back—then 'help yourself, God helps you!' My legs began to wobble and I could have cried out, but instead, shut the lips and—forward! We stepped aboard the train, and pouf! it was finish—we were off!"

The day was a fine one in February. Leaving the centre of France for a destination of which nobody was aware, the following morning Paris was circled and abandoned in a whirl of fresh snow; in the evening Amiens; at midnight Calais; and in the morning at five a two-hour stop was allowed in Dunkerque. Nine o'clock the *chemin de fer* negotiated Bergues. A heavy rain was falling. Detraining, the weary company set out on a twenty-five mile tramp, packs on the backs, and the wet eating in at every pore, until arrival at Oostcapelle. This Flemish town is located directly upon the boundary of Belgium.

Francois' company lodged in a barn through which the wind howled in cutting, slashing, damp stretches, rising into a shriek of abandon, chilling the marrow in the bones, and driving wet spray through the straw. Still nobody complained. Nobody was awake!

As soon as light was restored the march continued for ten miles. The regiment had returned from the trenches two days before, and, considerately, each man among the fresh arrivals was given his choice of company instead of the expected wholesale assignment. Content to be among members of the old Iron Division, not one of whom, however, was a familiar, François made no choice and was designated for the 8th Company, 2nd Battalion, and set to doing exercises.

François found himself stiff-legged and weary. His heavy trench shoes made him ungainly and drew his feet downward at every step. He persisted. His eyes watered from

the cold; his cheeks blued. The weight of his gun cut into his shoulder. He was glad at "Company—rest!" After that they marched and countermarched. He watched the boots of the man ahead plunk—plunk! into the soil; saw them halt, turn, start in the other direction; lift—fall, lift—fall. He thought he should go mad. Ten years is a long time to remember manœuvres. He prayed for relief,—action in the trenches. Anything to keep those feet before him from plunk—plunking into the soil.

When the order came to evacuate Wormhoudt it was already the 25th of February. During the last days the weather had turned icy cold. A break occurred now and the snow started to fall. It blew before the wind and piled up in drifts. The weary troops ploughed their way to Kronbeck—on to Poperinghe; and departed after one night to arrive in St. Jean, close to Ypres, on a brilliant sun-flooded morning, with the snow in myriad shimmers over the landscape.

By this time he was on excellent terms with every member of the company. But two young men, above the average in intelligence and education, became his especial friends. The first, *soldat* Parisot, proves in the accompanying narrative one of the most interesting of characters until his untimely end; and the second, the hero Felizé, receives his promotion and his "*Croix*" after duly valiant service in the Somme.

On the night of the 8th of March, without a cloud in the sky, and the whole empyrean studded with brilliant celestial bodies, the company was bidden into the trenches. The start was made in silence from St. Jean. A rough country road spread before the advancing troops. Shell-holes bore into the ground and rendered the going extremely difficult. On every side of the field were low-spoken voices and the thud of artillery-horses. Occasionally a soft whinny was hushed by command.

From the fields the marchers deployed along the highway, and at ten arrived at Zonnebeke, no more than eighteen

kilometres distant from Ypres, and on the firing line in Belgium.

They passed through the village. Already at that time it had been levelled by mortars, and gave up hollow sounds from the gloom among its ruins. François thought the place and death-sounds rather ghostly, and was glad to be trudging briskly among his fellows and away from the confines of the town. All at once an immense whistling filled the air. He goose-fleshed and shivered. He thought the graves of the dismal cemetery were opening, shedding forth their dead, and their humming voices riding on the wind. He heard it again. It passed closer and shrieked and spit wind at him. All at once he knew! . . . and when the next shriek came he quickly lowered his head. It was involuntary. He could not have helped it. With the first knowledge that it was a shell coming over from the front, he was moved to bow down. Some instantaneous impulse fastened on his collar behind and pushed at his head and he felt it impossible to resist. He heard everybody laughing and thought maybe they were playing a joke on him. Perhaps the man behind. . . .

He turned and saw—that this man was a good number of paces away. It could not have been he. Finally Parisot said, appreciating his confusion: "See, *mon brave*, the one you hear whistling will never touch you,—*comprenez?*"

He drew from this that they knew he was fresh from the base, and grew red and ashamed until his friend explained that it was the shell he never heard that would result in doing damage to his frame.

Not a communication trench was to be found at this time in this sector of the line. Each company of the regiment formed its own narrow file at Zonnebeke, crossing the fields on the tread of angels, and silently stepping to the entrance of the trench.

The night was inky black with a stiff breeze coming up and threatening to blanket the stars with a fleece of clouds. The close-up rattle of rifle-fire and occasional artillery-thunder dinned in more insistently with every advance step.

François felt a slight touch at his elbow and an arm protruded through his. A whisper in his ear: "Extremely careful, my friend; let me go in advance." He saw it was Felizé, and allowed him to pass. The more experienced of the two reached back a hand and guided the fresh reservist into a carefully chosen path, avoiding the shell-holes as if by magic. Several of the men splashed and stumbled into these, and there was an occasional low-spoken oath. François forgot all about the pack on his back. Even his gun was second nature in his hand. The shells whistled and cracked. Sometimes there was an explosion farther away. One of these projectiles shrilled uncomfortably close. The patriot ducked and stepped aside, and instantly slid, churning up mud and snow, into a deep-pitted shell-hole! The water came up around him, throwing widely in all directions and settling to his waist, icy and black.

Breathless, François strove to lift himself out. Scrambling, clutched at the edges. His pack held him back. The rifles barked and mocked him. He dug with his bayonet, seeking purchase. The column filed past. Nobody saw him; or, seeing, heeded. He was about to cry out, but knew this was fatal.

All at once a soldier clutched at the ground barely in time to save himself from crashing down upon the patriot. François touched his hand. The soldier reached down and jerked him with prodigious strength to his feet. It was Parisot! François could have embraced him.

At the entrance of the trench everything was proceeding as noiselessly as possible, each man helping his fellow, and all swimming ankle-deep in mud. Small whispers from one man to another carried forward the captain's instructions. François felt as if he were dreaming. The eerie hour, the dull bodies, the stealthy murmurs—he was aware of the labyrinthian presence of unexplored ways and gloomy passages. He knew the high *parapet* must be stretching up protecting arms to the grim-streaking dawn that would presently break over friend and foe. He wondered what death

was like. Worried if he could face it. He even thought of his little ones, and how far removed they were from all this. His heart softened and he crept along behind his fellows determined to be noble unto the end—as noble as old Flanders!

Pretty soon they were all settled in their places, a metre removed one from the next. The troops that were relieved went silently, clutching their arms and picking their way through the trench. The water in the declivities settled; not a sound was heard. Then, directly after, whisper to whisper, whisper to whisper. It grew up, louder, closer—it seemed voluminous in that eerie night, but it was only a whisper! A word from the captain: "Everybody on watch!"

He rose and balanced himself with his eyes peering over the parapet.

We have now brought François, the patriot, from America to France, and France to Belgium, through a series of adventures and delays, and into the very front-line trenches. It is, therefore, in the belief that his direct narrative will present the facts of warfare as it is practised to-day to the reader in its most vivid colouring, that we relinquish the third person, past tense, to the first person, present, and allow him to tell the story of Ypres and of Arras, of the Vosges and the Champagne, Verdun and the Somme, the Aisne, and finally Lorraine, as he experienced it with the Iron Division of France for thirty-two months in the trenches.

### III

#### YPRES

**A**LIGHT flares over the landscape, bringing into sudden prominence our lines and those of the enemy. I watch it shed and flicker, blood-red; and shortly one comes up from the other side—white, as ours is fading. More of these Bengal fires follow, first from one side then the other—I have time to observe them now—and this keeps an interval of light almost constantly over the trenches and *entre les lignes*.\*

I have been looking over the *parapet*. I withdraw my head now, you may believe me, quickly! Plunk—plunk! Rifle bullets are striking against the earth of the *parapet* and—staying there. The enemy is not over twenty-five metres removed; probably closer here than at any other point along the front.

My heart is thumping wildly. I imagine every sort of disaster. The explosions and flaring lights add a weird tinge to the sombre night. I feel queer and unable to realise I am at war; that I am expected to shoot a mortal—an enemy—I have never seen—can not see. My pack feels weighty. I swing it to the ground at my feet—am about to stack my gun against the trench-wall.

Parisot leans over—he is next to me on my left side—and touches my arm. He motions something, but I can not see what, as the light only flares an instant, and it is just fading. I whisper, and ask him what to do. He whispers back: “Look over the *parapet* every time a *fusée* goes up and see if there is anything changed.” He evidently thinks the enemy may attempt a sally. “Get your head

\*Between the lines—the French No-Man’s Land.

down as quickly as possible, and fire a shot once in a while in the opposite direction."

The night is fiendishly cold, biting, cutting; the trench swims with water. My soaking, wet feet are numb and the ankles commence to pain. My fingers grow dead also. Parisot plucks me again by the sleeve. He wants me to shoot. The others are shooting—several times in succession, so I follow. I fire a few shots—at nothing. The barrel of the gun grows hot. Ah! Good place to warm the hands!

Night passes along. All remains clear between the lines. Fritz is as hard-pressed as we to keep the blood circulating.

At five o'clock, still in the dark, the cooks come up with our rations: wine, brandy, coffee, meat, vegetables and bread—sufficient for a twenty-four hour sustenance per man. This must be husbanded to last. No over-feeding. Everything is, of course, ice-cold.

Daybreak ushers in a change of watch.

Daybreak is a beautiful thing—if you are not too sleepy. You like to watch the dawn creep in and the filmy shadows of worn night travel away. You notice a certain easing up of the cannons—if they have been pounding—and the rifles lay down, as it were, for a breath of peace. The damp earth breathes and smells in a sweeter way. Long shadows ply in between the land of destruction. You seem to want to feel them, but drown out your senses instead by allowing them to slip off into hazy-town, forgetting all the while that beyond you—just over the crest of the *parapet*—is another man who is seeking out your life. Who is he? Human, armed and legged; muscled, brained and bred! passed through the same forge of existence; learned in the same life school; whirled in the same catastrophe. What consideration has he that you have not? What oppression? What deliverance? What passions? When will it all end? What is it all for?

Strange thoughts, these, for a man who has just gotten into the fray. And that, entirely through his own volition!

I suppose they are half of a dream.

One man out of every five is forced to remain awake—these constituting the day-watch; and their places are taken at two-hour intervals by changes. The rotation continues throughout the daytime. In place of sleeping, after the first drowsiness is passed, I have a good look at the trenches. They are poorly built. Too wide and not deep enough. Under one metre the water oozes up. Things are in bad disorder—every inch flooding wet, and the tide rising all the time. The *boches* could make short work of us! Word is sent to our rear and the pumps gotten in, one installed at every hundred metres distance, and the men set at handling them.

In certain spots this trench is scarce one metre, fifty centimetres in depth—or height, as this includes the *parapet*. Of course, in passing here during the day it is impossible to go upright. Down on the hands and knees is the rule.

Before each man is a *creneau*. This is the soldier's shoot-hole and is made by forcing a hollow stick in such a way through the *parapet* as to give free vent to the passage of a bullet.

*Creneaux* make excellent spy-places. I can see our own barbed-wire stretching and twisting before the *parapet*, making a perfect cluster. Now, plainly, the distance between the two lines is very short. This is perfect aim! Cool fingers seem to stir rapidly down my back, chilling the marrow and twitching every nerve. Is this fear?

The German wires proceed in exactly the same manner. If a man fell upon these trenches when they were without occupants, which should he select? Not one from the other—unless Fritz is a better home-builder. I have no way of knowing up to this stage, but I take it for granted. He has had it in mind. We are, as yet, green.

One thing: Fritz has also water in his trench. We can hear him laughing and pumping it out. The sand seeps in toward the middle, leaving a shallowish space, narrowing at the base. It is necessary to check this, so we dig, further

water is admitted and further pumping occasioned, and further swearing at intervals. It is all very monotonous.

This first morning Parisot and another boy—a *garçon* from one of the boulevard *cafés* in Paris, hungry and complaining—join myself, and the three of us arrange to construct our *guitoune*.

Parisot says that a *poilu* must use the words "*guitoune*"—which is universal now, but of Arabian extraction—or "*cachibi*" or "*abri*," to name his trench residence or dug-out. We are looking forward to nightfall to throw up our temporary abode. The day—my first in the trenches—passes without incident. Rifle shots and flying shells perforate but do not penetrate; explode at intervals but do little damage. The earth sputters and flies. Our men duck or seem stoic, and retort with glum fortitude and an occasional grunt.

With night-fall the bombarding is once more ushered in. To be sure, the heavy cannons do not engage, but the constant rattle of rifles raises a din that deafens. We put half of our men on watch and the other half work on the *guitounes*. Change occurs every two hours. Somebody has ventured out and gathered timbers from nearby farms. We cut a square hole out of the earth every third man, cover the top with boards to form a roof, and hang our tent-clothes over the opening. We pin these in place to the earth with cartridges or wooden pegs, and lay in straw—recruited also from the farms—to form our beds.

At daybreak come the cooks as upon the previous night with rations, including brandy and wine, and the whole thing starts over again.

The firing is at this time very light. I have seen nothing mortal and almost come to suspect the whole thing is play. I sleep easily. I eat heartily. I joke under the breath; and shovel and work and keep watch and shoot and pretend to seek out the enemy with every bullet.

The boulevard *garçon* is sitting with me before our *guitoune*. "Isn't it rotten business—war?" says the *garçon*.

"Why don't you be cheerful like Parisot?" I whisper. The *garçon* gives me a look of disgust.

"I wonder what is the matter with Fritz. He is very slow to-day," he says, getting on his feet. He walks deliberately to the point in the *parapet* that is badly protected, to look over. "I see nothing." Simultaneously there is a splash in the water at the bottom of the trench. He has fallen like a log. A Mauser bullet, ploughing cleanly through his skull, has perforated a hole the size of a quarter, leaving a black rim, circular and soggly crimson.

This is the first fatality I have seen of the war, and it impresses me deeply. Parisot murmurs and turns aside with a shrug. But he is twitching. His heart is soft.

If war is going to mean horrible things like this—fair men broken and life demoralised; if it is going to have blown skulls and stumped arms and cavernous ruins in what were once men— Ah, I am a coward. I know it now. My eyes are glassy. And still the *garçon* was not friendly.

He lies huddled, legs snarled; evidently quivering a moment after the impact, and his poor soul winging its way to—where? Paris, and the boulevards? Had he no less a mother than I? Or a heart?

It is terrible—it is war!

After this the outlook becomes quite calm. I am insistent on being a stoic—like my companions. War is not made for philosophers. One must act, not think. I take my brandy and iced coffee, and lay down, utterly spent. We sleep. And there is a dead man not four paces away! . . .

Later on I have the watch. A man has his shoulder ripped open by an explosive bullet. The blood gushes out. He screams—reaches out wildly—collapses, moaning. The sound is dreadful. Nausea gets me again. Am I never to grow accustomed to these scenes? Sickening, true; yet who is disturbed in the company? Nobody. Not the *co-pain\** in his *guitoune* who will know him no more. Not the

\*Friend.

watch standing by whom he splattered upon. Not the first-aid unit who binds up his wounds.

The day passes, smoking cigarettes—calmly, monotonously.

The night passes, thawing out considerably in milder weather.

I have made a great discovery: If the brandy is taken *after* the ice-cold coffee it warms everything up!

But what a poignant tragedy stirs on this day—the 11th of March. One of the men receives a package of sweet-morsels from home. We are invited to share with him, and he addresses us, saying softly:

"From the *mère*, a watch—look, a knife, a pocketbook with ten francs, *mes amis*, and all this! . . ." He shows us cakes and cookies and several kinds of raisins and nuts, and he is as pleased as a child at Christmas. His face looks like an animated cherub, but grimed with dirt. He smells bad, this soldier, but he has a good heart.

He starts for his *quitoune* to wait for us there, and I pluck him by the sleeve, saying in his ear:

"Be careful on account of the passage. The *parapet* is low. Somebody killed there yesterday."

He jerks away, nodding.

"*Eh bien*. It is all right."

One instant later there is a scream. Parisot goes over to investigate and comes back with a frown.

"Shot in the belly—dying," he says.

We feast on the cakes,—like ghouls robbing the dead, it seems to me. The sergeant-major is gathering the victim's newly-acquired possessions to send home—only not the food.

At five, welcome orders come in—we are relieved from duty during the first part of the night. This means before twelve. Joyous news! Monotony and grime and horror are biting in too deep. We must get out—into fresh environment. As usual we take up the night watch, but gather our knapsacks up close, filling them in; despoiling the *quitounes* of tent-cloth and blankets. Not until 11.30, however,

does the relief start in. We go out, single file, and silently out of the firing zone, with the snapping rifles and angry shells far behind, and the solemn night before us, girding in Ypres.

Four kilometres farther is Vlamertinghe. We negotiate it by five o'clock marching right along. It is the morning of the 12th of March, 1915. We are lodged in private houses. The furniture is moved out by the occupants, then the government steps in, throws us a bundle of straw in attic or cellar, as the case may be, and we are told to sleep soundly. Every one crumples into the hay, thanking the good God that it is fresh,—then oblivion, until the morning has advanced several hours.

Now cleanliness at the front is next to—impossible! but a shower-bath is provided, cold enough! and underneath go the *poilus*, shrugging and shivering, but grateful. I snatch my turn. *Dieu!* Whoever thought it was so pleasant to be clean again!

After this, the clothes. It is necessary to give these a sound scrubbing. "Be thou thine own handmaiden!" The government furnishes the soap. The gummed-up rifles are a sight. Every bit of the mechanism is dirt-cruste*d*. Blankets follow, tent-cloths, and the knapsacks. Finally the company must identify itself!

"Supper is served, *m'ssieu's!*" directly after; and we file out to see the sights.

Vlamertinghe is a town of scarce three thousand inhabitants. Twenty-two kilometres from the firing-line, only an occasional Teuton shell wings its way over. A home crashes, the *débris* spins out, flutters and falls. The inhabitants take it all as a matter of course.

We have no permission to go to Ypres, but the following day Parisot and myself, joined by Felizé, start for the English encampment. Many of our boys are there. The English have attempted conversation but with ill success. I am alone skilled in both languages, so the troops cluster around, every one eager to make an exchange for tobacco and cigarettes and knives, razors, jams, canned mutton.

Prices range—but seldom high. Everything changes hands.

We spend a fair afternoon and wind up together clustered in a drinking-house and raising up Belgian beer.

"Flat stuff an' 'ardly fit!" says a disgruntled "Tommy."

"What does he say?" Parisot asks me in French.

"He says it is stale."

"Tell him it has been waiting for him eight months!" Parisot retorts.

I tell this to the Briton.

"The bloody bloke!" he sputters, while all his comrades are laughing. "'E's got a 'ell of a lot to say. Tell 'im we'll show 'im before the Summer's along."

I can see bad blood is brewing because Parisot has it in for the British. He insists that the real struggle occurred before ever a man got over from Britain. Now, this may be so. France faced the enemy and established history during those early periods while yet her allies dozed. Still, I have known rare fighting since these remarks, and have never had reason to believe "Tommy" falters.

The town-houses are regulated by law. Every public place is shuttered by 8:30. The "Tommies" whistle and sing as they swing down the road. Our own cantonment is undisturbed and another night passes in straw bedding.

We are reviewed for arms by 9 A. M., and told off for leisure, but ordered to return by four. At this time the word goes out to be ready to entrench again by nightfall. It is the 15th now, and thawing slightly.

We leave Vlamertinghe, arriving at Zonnebeke by 10 P. M. Just outside of Zonnebeke is a large structure—a former brick *fabrique*. It is strawed and thawed and not lacking cheer. We are clustered into this, and commence an easy, loafing night,—but this is quickly dissipated. The entire company is started in handling materials from Zonnebeke, which is a sort of *depot de materiel*.

We have to carry boxes of *cartouches*,\* barbed-wire fencing, steel shields for the *parapets*, heavy sheet metal for the roofs of the *quitounes*, and additional

\*Cartridges.

manner of stuff of all natures to the firing line. Two hundred metres beyond the brick factory shelter quits, and it is from there over an open field we proceed in full exposure of the enemy. Shots and shells scream. Danger hovers with each step.

As night progresses the wind changes and a freezing snap sets in. A cutting chill goes through the air, through our limbs, bluing the hands. My numb fingers clutch colder steel—cling with deathlike grip. Across the fields,—bullets flying,—I feel a spectre stalks. I hear him, run from him. . . . My imagination!

\* Cold dew comes out on my forehead.

After this trip we are ordered into quarters. It is strange—psychologically, the captain or the lieutenants seem to know just when they have reached the breaking-point with the men.

We build up rousing fires inside the *fabrique*. It gets almost cheerful. These spasms—fear and chill and death and life and relaxation—follow one another rapidly. All the human passions and beliefs, rushing with the speed of express trains, leave one exhausted—worn—weary.

In the morning—cristi! the sun is shining with the warmth of a Spring day! The terrain is quiet. We warm our coffee. Light up the cigarettes. I link my arm through Parisot's and off we go for a look at the sights. It is only a hundred metres to the *Château de Zonnebeke*, or, rather, what was! The building is a well of débris with tottering walls, wavering shadows and slinking forms. Through the halls black holes grow intelligible with the entrance of the sun and we are able to read whole tragedies into everything.

"Were I a painter . . ." says Parisot.

And I can only echo: "Were I a poet. . . ."

What havoc is wrought in this once marvel!

Tapestry, paintings in oil in distorted frames, chinaware and silverware,—the whole matter looks disinterred. The furniture to a stick is crashed to death; glasses, candelabra, priceless *objets d'art* lie strewed to the winds. It is so mel-

ancholy, the whole grand scene—so utterly without hope. I have my choice of the riches of a Pharaoh. I annex two books. Parisot sighs over inlaid tables. He is art-struck. He helps himself liberally to these things, which is nonsense. One cannot pack more than their *sac*.

"Poor fool," I say, laughing, "are you going to eat from nacre and ebony?"

"*Fout le camp au diable!*"\* he grumbles. "I know I have to throw it away, but look at the top will you,—that is rare."

He leaves it standing in the open field and we pass the day in reading—racy French literature. The men are lolling around, smoking their pipes. Another group spreads a blanket over the floor and settles down to cards by candle-light. The building is extremely high-vaulted, giving it the appearance of a cavern, shades flickering in the single small light like a pirates' *caché*.

By nine o'clock we are ordered back to work. It is the same heavy employment as the previous night. Shells fall constantly into Zonnebeke. On the night of the 18th of March it commences to snow, which works finally into a blizzard, piling up drifts a whole night and a day. Labouring through this to the front is madness! But we do it,—again and again,—loading up supplies. War has no mercy.

Some time following the relief comes in. Back as far as St. Jean, ploughing through the sleet, stamping the snow to pack-ice, staggering under the *azor* †—we finally find rest at dawn, utterly spent.

The sun, reflecting upon the snow, sends us out of the straw into a flaring daylight. Our men stand around with their shirts in their hands. What is this? Examination? . . .

"Felizé," I say, approaching him, "what does this mean? What are they doing?"

"Don't be so smart," he says, "they are examining for totos. You don't know what are totos?"—as I look incredulous,—"well, they are trench-life, *vous comprenez?* Life in the trenches, is it not? Yo-ho! Well, *mon copain*,

\*Go to the devil.

†Knapsack.

you are no better than any one else. You will get some just the same. Totos are no respecters of persons."

I cannot answer anything. The gruesomeness of this suggestion is appalling. And all at once my back commences to feel uneasy . . . oh, my Heaven!—parasitic! In my shame I rush out—away—into the solitude. . . . In one instant I have off my shirt. I am all alone—hiding behind a tree. One—two of these lice are visible on the *liquette*. We call it *liquette*—not chemise, the shirt. They are small things and dirty—miserable,—the totos. I have a wild desire to cast the whole thing away, but I cannot go back without a covering. On it goes again. I make haste to the cantonment, have a change of linen, and pass the thing over to a woman who is washing for the soldiers at a few *sous* each.

The impression is with me all the balance of the day. Totos! . . . human lice . . . filth! Ugh, shudders go up and down the spine. I will never forget it. This to me is the vilest feature of the whole war. I can face rifles, cannons, wild men, *boches*,—but totos— *Pied de choux!* Totos! . . .

Lunch over, Parisot and Felizé proceed with me to Ypres. It is only a couple of kilometres from St. Jean. This ground is the most fought-over—with but one exception—of the entire terrain. The weather is quite warm.

Ypres must have been a fine-looking little city in peace times. The *faubourgs* are not much damaged up to date. The centre, however, is practically destroyed. Ypres' famous cathedral, for instance, is one-half a ruin—the good half trembles in the breeze. It ought to fall. Demolition is no demolition unless the whole thing goes. One does not like to see half of anything. I do not approve of a man without legs or a churn without a handle. One goes into war to be killed and a maimed man has not fulfilled all the conditions.

Now, the historic *Halles d'Ypres*, on the other hand, is a first-class heap of rubbish. Small parts of walls, upright to a height of three metres, wear the old-time glory: paintings

and decorative art, which simply accentuate by their whimsicality the utter débris of the balance. The undestroyed area of the city, which is the business portion, slumbers on the surface. Underground trade is going ahead lustily. We buy anything we want—food, knick-knacks, bazaar clothing,—out of cellars, from women for the most part. Vegetables are on display. Groceries on the shelves. Cafés serve liquor—wines and beer, and special Belgian concoctions. And with every order of meat the everlasting French-fried potatoes and salad are brought forth.

Ypres wots little of the Hun. Her walls may fall, and *citoyens* perish; shells scream overhead, or claw through stone and bone. Business is more profitable than ever. Her money coffers gleam brave and bright.

St. Jean is by far the more restive under battle restraint. That is, the inhabitants know more misery and less fortitude. Amusements there are none. We spend our time between drilling and the shower-bath. A young woman is keeper of the house in which we are quartered. Her father is at home, and brothers away on the battle-front. A neighbour is carrying on something terrible about the loss of her son. Papa Porquet quiets her. "What do you expect, madame—war is war!"

There is a small hubbub outside. We go into the street. A *toube* is flying over the lines and into the very heart of the city. It swoops quite low, the observer evidently making his calculation and marking for batteries. It is not two minutes when the shells begin to fall inside the city. Everybody goes into hiding, swearing and expostulating at the Germans and wishing them no end of ill-luck. It is not by any means a pleasant sport—waiting and presuming you will be killed. Non-combatant raids are the worst form of terrorism the Hun has yet invented, and it makes the blood boil with indignation when a trooper has to sit by with his *fusil* across his knees.

By and by a tremendous crash marks the retirement of the batteries. The earth breaks up at some metres distance and the air becomes filled with charred and sooty smoke.

"Pretty close," Papa Porquet mutters, his face grave, and rising as if to go out. His daughter intercepts him.

"Wait awhile," she says.

Several soldiers come in looking and squinting their eyes.

"Where was it?" he asks.

"Half a kilometre over," shrugs one, pointing with his thumb. "Bad business; somebody is killed."

"Soldier," adds another,— "they blew up the house."

Papa Porquet's white face relaxes. He smiles and pats the young daughter's head. "It is over now. Well, there you are."

This daughter tells me by and by they feared the blast had damaged her sister's home. "She lives in that direction," she says, "but there are no soldiers quartered on the premises."

Parisot and myself go over to have a look at the damage. Sure enough, a house is laid in ruins. They have a lot of confusion at the scene and a good deal of crying.

"What's the matter?" Parisot asks a neighbour's boy.

"Nothing. Only a woman and her children."

"Killed?"

"No. A soldier is killed."

"All this excitement for a soldier?" shrugs Parisot. "At the front it is nothing."

"Nothing!" shouts a woman indignantly. "You call it nothing when a father is killed and all his children put into the street?"

"Whose children?"

"The soldier's—fool!"

"Then it is not a Frenchman?"

"It is a Belgian and he was visiting home."

"Ho-ho!" says Parisot. "That is indeed grave. What about the children?"

"That remains to be seen," replies the woman. "Elena is a widow now and Lord knows her father has little enough."

"How many children?"

"Five."

"Whew! Who is her father?"

"Porquet over there. He will strangle when he hears the news."

"Whew!" Parisot whistles the second time. "Shall we tell him, Americain?" he says to me.

Now this is a job I do not like. It is terrible to be the bearer of such tidings.

"The poor little girl," I am thinking out loud all the time, referring to the daughter. "What will she say? It must be her brother-in-law who is dead."

"You go and tell, Parisot," I say, looking away from him.

"*Diable!*" he says under his breath. But he goes.

In the evening I am back at the house. Nobody is here but the soldiers in quarter. I say nothing. Pretty soon Parisot comes in and signs to me. I go out with him.

"See here, Americain, how much have you?"

"Money?"

"*Oui.*"

"*Je suis fauché!*"\*

"*Dieu! Not a sou?*"

I shake my head.

"Well, see here, do you think we can get up a collection?"

"For who?"

"The widow, *andouille!* She has five small children."

"We can try."

We pass around the village, but principally among the soldiers, and Parisot has a good deal to say. "What's the matter?" I ask him. "Are you smitten with the girl?"

"With the young one—yes," he confesses frankly. "I have been observing her from the beginning, but I think she has a sweetheart somewhere."

"Leave it to me—I find out," I assure him, taking in the money where we can get it, and that is mostly everywhere. It is not uncommon to have instances like this any time, but the population is always willing to help, and this is charac-

\*I am broke.

teristic of the whole of Northern France and Belgium.

"Do you think it is quite fair to make up to the girl with the war on?"

"I cannot help the war," he grumbles. "But the girl—well, *Jesu!* she is sweet!"

"Yes, she is a nice one,—has nice eyes," I say agreeably.

Parisot looks at me sharply.

Shortly we go to our cantonment and our pockets are full of wealth. I empty mine into his.

"Go over and give it to them yourself, soft-heart," I say, laughing, pushing him away. His face becomes red. But in the evening he whispers in my ear:

"You should see how happy! I think there is nobody else."

Which shows how inconsistent a lover can be, because he told me in the afternoon just as emphatically that there was some one.

On the morning of the 24th of March we are notified to get ready for a return to those infernal trenches; but first there is a general review. I really pity Parisot through all this for the poor fellow has fallen deeply in love. His head is in a turmoil, and his heart . . . There is no living with him at all! It is just Juliette—Juliette—Juliette!"

The girl is really a very fascinating creature. She seems to favour this Frenchman with her heart, but he is not sure and she will not tell him. In fact, I scarcely think he has dared lift eyes to her fully as yet. Fancy a soldier, game to the core, ready to rush into the path of the enemy, face him, breast exposed and eye to the rifle's mouth—ready to sacrifice all, and life itself, for his country's welfare without a quaver—and afraid to open his mouth to a slip of a woman! Well, that is love, or whatever the novelists care to call it.

We leave St. Jean at seven o'clock on the same night, ploughing the roadways as before and crossing into the identical, shell-torn field behind the trenches.

The weather is again clear and cold. We move into the same sector, same emplacement as on the earlier journey,

and exchange positions with the retiring watch. There is no relief from the dread monotony. Trench life is life in an open grave without the actual safety of death. This may seem paradoxical—but at least when you are *bouzillé*\* you are through.

"Never fear," says my *copain*, "you will be in action early enough. It is only too soon to suit me."

He evidently refers to his *inamorata* at St. Jean. Love and war are supposed to blend well, but to my mind illy enough.

March 25th—two men killed!

March 26th—three men killed!

March 27th—four men killed!

Was ever such monotony!

Yet a slight variation occurs in this second instance. It is a bomb and not a rifle-shot that renders our comrades *hors de combat*. You can hear these things departing from the *boche* lines—see them travelling at a slow pace over the short distance. Shaped like a vermouth bottle and about the same size, coloured in reds and blacks, they are easily visible in the pale sky. You go to left or right in the trenches, according as the men on watch sing out: "Go left!" "Go right!" The explosive power of these terrors is enormous. And the principal result, outside of getting killed, is to smash a good many men's ear-drums.

The 28th of March is Palm Sunday.

The day opens with a spray of bullets and five or six men wounded. The accuracy is so fiendish, I make a mental deduction from whence this could have come. Having satisfied my mind, I send word to the captain, who advances himself to investigate the source. He shoves a periscope above the *parapet*. Instantly there is a rain of lead! . . .

"*Mon capitaine*," I say, "it is that little house standing on our right. They have a machine-gun and engage us on the flank."

"I believe you are right," he rejoins. "*Tiens!* Do you hear something?"

\*Killed.

It is a delicate music, and now lusty voices pick up the chorus. The *boches* have an accordion and are singing: "Die Wacht" . . .

This sentiment goes for nothing. "We give it to them right!" mutters the captain. He telephones back to the batteries, and a half hour later an artillery-officer makes his way through and looks over the ground.

"Order this trench evacuated here at two," he says; and at two we are told to withdraw at a discreet distance. The officer returns and the batteries give them one shot. It falls right of the house, but correctly distanced. He telephones back: "Two turns to the left." The words are scarcely out when a second shot wings over at a relatively low angle.

"*Rasé le parapet!*"\* Parisot sings out, and the *kepis* go off our heads like magic. But the shell travels true. It lands squarely in the *boches'* nest, hurling parts of it a good many metres in all directions.

A terrific detonation shakes the air. Rifles crack and blare. The artillery-officer orders through the phone:

"*Même angle; tir fauché par quatre!*" †

An instant later four shells come screaming together. They plant with the firmness of avenging angels in the Teuton camp, and débris, stone and armament clutter the air! The whole thing goes up in a gigantic cataclysm. There is the jargon of twisted metal, echo of voices and blasted souls! Music?—what but the Heavenly anthem for these poor devils from now on. One is too often tempted to be lenient with the foe.

Our relentless artillery man orders still another *rafale* of four. This is an earnest that the house will speak no more.

"I hope they will be satisfied now," says our captain. For a Palm Sunday I think we have done very well. Fritz remains quiet from now on—to such an extent it arouses suspicion. However no further bombs come over and we

\*Burn the parapet! meaning, a low shot.

†Same angle; fire by four.

are relieved by midnight. The way over to Ypres is a blank. We sleep on most of the march. It is sheer doggedness that keeps a muscle moving after every bit of energy has been pressed out.

We go into our old lodgings and give over the next day to the cleanliness that is "next to impossible."

An Alsatian in our company—we have about eighteen—lays me a wager that he can obtain more food without money than I can with it, in a neighbouring store. It is conducted by a "*jeune femme*," and she is not unprepossessing. Immediately I see his plan, which is simple enough, and practised every day. The fellow is going in for a smash, and if he makes good, well, then it is up to the boy how much of the food or the stuff he can carry away. Surely he gets all he wants—and toll-less.

"Stand by," he says, "and give me a chance with the lady."

The whole company hears of it, even to the captain, and speculation runs high as to which of us will triumph.

"How many *francs* have you?" says Felizé to me, *intending* to bolster up my account. But this is not quite fair.

"Enough," I retort, though I have but four, and a few *sous*.

We repair to the shop, the whole crowd tagging on in the rear. They are grouped around in such a way that they can hear what is going on inside without being seen. All the Alsace boys have money on their man. He is a likely enough looking fellow.

"*Bon jour, petite*," he says, coming up to the little shop-keeper. "I suppose you have your fill of soldiers always along this way?"

"*Oui*."

"You sell much stuff?"

"*Oui*." She is evidently awaiting his order.

"Make much money?"

"*Oui*."

"Love?"

"*Oui—non, non!*" she stammers, confused and blushing.

"You said '*oui*,'" he reminds her.

"I said '*non*,'" she retorts. But he does not think she means it.

He puts out his hand to touch her and she gives him a smart rap over the mouth. The troopers outside let out a lusty yell which puts an end to the whole business and sends her muttering and him swearing out of the store.

"You have put him up to it!" she cries, shaking her little fist. "Go away, all of you!" My *copains* can hardly hold their sides. I step up at this instance, and, brushing past, gravely proceed to make my purchases with a chorus of yells and taunts at poor Alsace outside the store.

He evidently steps inside at this juncture and creeps behind the lady's back, where the cool fellow proceeds to load his pockets with all good eatables he sees about the shelves. I am tempted to roar out at him, but the boldness of the thing commands admiration.

"Are you through?" he says suddenly, appearing on my flank. "If so, we will go. . . ."

"You go on—get out!" shrills the lady.

"All right." He shrugs nonchalantly, proceeds to the door.

"Come back!" she yells, running after him. "Pay for what you have!"

A second time a roar goes up outside. The herrings, part of his requisition "*sans peur et sans reproche*," are ingloriously sticking their tails out of his pocket!

She makes a grab for them as he leaps aside and they go out on the floor.

"See here, what he has done," she sobs, losing her patience entirely. While a shout of glee outside tells of the victory of the Alsatians. "Such dealings I have never had in all my life." She puts her apron to her eyes. "Perhaps you are not going to pay me?" She eyes me with sudden suspicion.

"Certainly I am going to pay you," I protest. "And for what he has taken too."

I can never stand a woman's tears.

"There, take the whole lot," I insist, pressing the full amount of money into her hand. It is all I have. If I had more I should probably give her that also. She is not uncomely. And—well—that is the way of a man.

"Come often! Come often!" I can hear her shouting clear down to the camp.

"Sure we'll come often," says the Alsatian at a discreet distance. "We made a rich haul that trip." He is drawing snacks of every description out of bulging pockets and distributing with a free hand.

"Not you. It's as much as your life is worth," I retort. "Do you know I paid for your d——d herrings? . . ."

"Well—you got them."

I turn to Felizé: "Of all the brass nerve, this fellow beats them all. I got the herrings, yes, so I should pay for them—and he walks away with the entire store!"

"She had no business to refuse me," he chuckles, with his mouth full. "Next time she will know better. Wait until she checks up her stock."

Next day a complaint is received from the little store-keeper and the captain summons both of us for an explanation.

"Who got the herrings?" is his first enquiry. We burst out laughing. "Here,—the lady says you stole them from her store." At this moment she herself jumps in on the scene.

"They are a couple of scheming braggarts and I want them to pay me what they owe!"

"Pay?" says friend Alsace with the most innocent air, "you are already paid."

"No, *m'sieu*, you have not pay me for them herrings!"

"Not me, no; but *frangin* here,—he is pay you for the fish."

"But not for the balance the stuff!"

"He took nothing else!"

This is too much. Both the captain and myself can hold in no longer, and we burst into hearty peals of laughter. They are about as incomprehensible—she with her Belgian, he with his Alsatian accent—neither of whom can elucidate a word of French properly.

The captain sweeps us all outside with a gesture.

"Go along with your herrings," he shouts, "you make me sick! Stinking fish—it is no wonder you are all quarrelling. It serves you right. *Debine-toi!*"\*

We go laughing down the way,—that is to say, I laugh. The others: she calls him robber and he calls her wench, and they quarrel like a couple of sweethearts.

"*Ils s'engueulent?*" † says Felizé catching the infection. "He will be loving her yet!"

And so it proves.

The Alsatian, taken with the spirit of his "*femme belligerent*," calls regularly in the store and his hands are full of confections; so it must be that he has made his smash after all and I am a fair loser of my bet.

April whirls in with a frightful wind-storm, not uncommon in Belgium, and veering into rain and a deluge. We are once more in the trenches—same emplacement. The downpour continues for fully twenty-four hours. The straw in my *guitoune* is floating on a sea of mud. Every *poilu* complains and rips out oaths like rifle-shots and twice as frequent; and with as little cheer as mortal man ever knew before an Easter morn, we stand our watch in the oozing earth.

The dawn buds rich with the promise of flooding warmth—the sun comes up, rays spread over mire and flood, and slowly the whole prospect commences to steam.

The *poilus* take new life and a rejuvenated soul from each added filling of the lungs. They straighten out the *guitounes*, man the pumps, and give a hand to the reclaiming of their residences generally.

About ten o'clock Parisot is bending over our *cachibi*

\*Beat it.

†They argue?

when a small missile strikes him on the back. He springs up startled. There is no enemy in sight. He supposes he must have been mistaken, stoops again to his work. A small paper roll lies before him. . . .

Parisot hesitates for the fraction of a second before attempting to pick it up. The *boches* have so many fiendish tricks. Perhaps it hides a small exploding bomb. He reaches out finally,—takes it in his hand. It is a message wrapped around a little stone and tied with a string.

"See here, *copain*," says Parisot, motioning me, wreathed in smiles, "Fritz wants to make friends with me this morning."

On the paper in excellent French is inscribed:

"Happy Easter, *Kameraden Franzosen*, will the war soon be over? Have you bread? We give you tobacco in exchange. We are Saxons."

I have since learned that this is the first message of friendship that has crossed the "gully of sighs." It is a memorable thing. I am a little awed.

"Sure, send them bread!" exclaims Felizé, ever matter-of-fact, and perusing the message, which is passing from hand to hand.

We cut several wide slices from our loaves, impale them on the ends of our bayonets, and *cristi!* over the *parapet* they go, slung wide into the other trenches. The response is instantaneous!—packages of tobacco leap across and bombard our lines. Fritz is open-handed in this choice of ammunition as in all others!

We have done pretty good business. No further attempt at camaraderie is made, however; and, except for the lack of a single rifle shot, the day passes as any other. Before dusk a second epistle wings over from the *boches*:

"*Kameraden Franzosen*, we relieve to-night. Prussians take our place. We are Saxons."

So. The friendly Dresden boys are going to desert us in favour of their more blood-thirsty confrères. The Prussians are first-class devils in the trenches, and nothing suits them better than to attack. Further, their engineer corps is an A-1 unit. Surprise sorties and tunnelling are their second nature.

A thunder of rifle-fire announces the change. Bengal rockets flare. The burst and whistle of shells is terrifying. Pandemonium breaks out all at once! The entire line brightens with continuous flashing shots, and it is as much as one's life is worth to hazard a look.

"Let them expend their ammunition as long as they have too much of it," cautions our captain, his word carried forward to the entire company. "Save your bullets—don't shoot."

We are all on watch without chance to rest in the *guirtonnes*. It will be a wild night! . . .

The storming has commenced at one, and it continues ceaselessly until four. With so much shelling one would think the holocaust must be frightful, but we have only eight killed and fourteen wounded in the whole emplacement. These bodies lie as they have been shot, adding a gruesomeness to the scene. The wounded have first-kit treatment, the surgeon working in the glare of the rockets.

Toward daybreak the whole thing eases up.

By the time we have ploughed from under this bombardment, the sun is out, redoubling the warmth from yesterday, and the ground commences to bake.

We eat and smoke and read our newspapers, which have come in from various quarters. Mine occasions a good deal of comment—it is from San Francisco. The boys gaze on it without understanding and with a tinge of awe. America—especially, California—means a "Promised Land."

The relief is due at eleven o'clock. Pending that time there is apathy on the general front, strangely enough—total inertia. We suppose the Prussians are resting after their exertions of the previous night. That was a mad bombardment. Twenty devils let loose could not have paralleled it.

I have the watch from ten until twelve in the night. I am thinking: "If the relief comes in at eleven they will shave a full hour from my time."

Parisot goes on watch the same as I. He is checking off the moments on his *tocarde*\* every time a rocket goes up. It is ten . . . ten-twenty . . . ten-twenty-two . . . twenty-five . . . forty . . . forty-four——

"Fifty!" he sings out, exactly as there is the crack of a shell; and, following on the heels of this, a rumble—a gigantic upheaval, throwing us both on our faces . . . then cataclysm! We go up in the air, violently wrenched . . . a deafening detonation breaks! Horror—torture—misery . . . shrieks of wounded men—dying, throaty noises! The whole earth seems to cave and fall upon us as we are thudded down!

"Ah, God—what is this?" moans a choky voice close to me.

I put out my hand and contact something warm—swimming——

Dazed terror comes over me—hysteria! I withdraw my hand rapidly, wipe it on the earth . . . Something warm—swimming— Wild fear now that the thing may be Parisot's blood—sticky, red——

Ugh!

"Parisot—Parisot!" The rifles are rattling—machine-guns.

That is my voice, but he will not hear. Over this pandemonium—no. If he is dying—dead—no!

"Parisot! . . ."

"*Oui, copain*—here."

His cheery voice, ringing out, and a shudder of earth at my feet . . . some one is struggling up. Red rockets hang over the air.

"*Oui, copain*—here."

He gropes around my head where it is half-covered with earth. A weight is on my chest. I cannot rise.

"Parisot! . . ."

\*Watch.

"Cristi!" It is his sharp exclamation.

"What is the matter?"

"A bad mess here. Somebody has been spilled all over you."

"Dead men?"

"Oui."

That fear again—wild terror! . . . everything breaking loose in the head! I struggle to get up,—to fly—to race—to get out, somewhere——

"Here—here; wait until you are free. The earth is down."

He is digging, throwing things here—there.

Dead men—arms, legs—maybe. . . .

"*Diable!*" He gives a tug—throw.

It rolls off—falls to one side.

"Get up!" He jerks me to my feet. A crash of bullets wings its way over, scorching my ear. "*Planquez-vous!*" We are down again on the ground. Whroarr! T-zing! Our own 75s are smashing through now, backing up the foe. Rrrrip! They are growling—spitting, like mad dogs.

Lying flat—right by my ear is a soft, low sound. A moan! Ugh!

Smash—wang!

The moan again.

T-zing—whroarr!

Several cries . . . then the moan. . . .

Oh, God—what is war?

A voice raises over the uproar near at hand—a foot kicking right and left: "*Mille tonnerres!* get up—go over to the *croneaux*—all of you! Hell's pigeons, that you lie there! Up—all of you—*poltroons!*"

"Where is the relief?"

"Relief be dam——"

The snap of an angry shell cuts short his speech. He strikes out, and something yaps—groans——

"Euuuch!"

I can hear the officer's breath whistle in. He knows he

has struck wounded men and the thought is not pleasant. The big 75s are pounding—hard. The rockets flare. A sharp, cutting, tremendous crash occurs over to the left, tearing the inside of my ears like paper! It pains—oh, how it stabs and throbs!

"Vermouth bottles!" mutters Parisot, grimly.

"*Au creneau!*" says the stern voice of the officer.

"Yes, my lieutenant," Parisot responds, getting over to the *parapet*.

It cannot be helped. I feel around in the mud and filth and among the *maccabés*\*—choking, ready to vomit—with the rifles spraying death overhead and the *marmites*† screaming. The darkness is settling down with the intermission between rockets growing wider, and more frequent, and less light, and more dull splotches every moment. The battle is drawing off—like thunder retreating;—a storm, splashing wildly, smashing violently overhead one instant, the next fading, bearing away into the distance with farther and farther detonations as it cools.

That is engagement—war, line to line, over a valley of sighs!

I locate my *Lebel*‡ after fair search, proceeding to the *creneau*. Havoc seems to have been confined mostly to our trench and the ground beyond their lines. Not a head to shoot at—not a limb or arm. It is battle-ethics to fire, though, so I let fly—ten—twenty rounds at the invisible enemy. Parisot has done likewise. He peers cautiously over the top—drops instantly. . . .

"*Sacre bleu!*—don't move, it is another Vermouth!" He has seen the thing headed to the right, and it explodes a few metres away, hurling dirt in my face. Again that awful ripping of the ears, and pain. The charge in those things is frightful.

This is the dying gasp though. It quiets after this. We have a chance to examine what remains in our emplace-

\*Dead men.

†German shells.

‡French rifle system.

ment. Things are a fine havoc. The first explosion is most to blame. It came unexpectedly—in our very midst. The Prussian engineers have upheld their reputation,—they mined our trench. Stealthily, steadily, was this done—probably begun at some far-distant point and burrowed through with the precision of gophers. It must have taken days; these last boys put it into action.

The mine spread through twenty-five metres. Fifteen of these were ground of the 7th Company—to our right; the balance, ours. Our 4th Section got it the worst. Their entire earthwork is a mere ant-hill now, torn before the blast, which raised the floor and razed the *parapet* all in one jangle. Four mangled forms is the toll here. Six men are wounded. In the 7th, twelve men are dead and nine severely wounded and in a pitiful state of agony. Trench-mining is like that. You take the other fellows in the back. You burrow, hunt and dig, without knowledge from them—you lay your lines. You light your fuse. You know they must be resting—singing—dreaming of home and peace, perhaps—and *tonnerre de Dieu!* It is over—one giant, blasting sheet of venom, shot up through the ground at their feet,—volcanic in its action, demolishing, tearing, destroying. Sixteen lives are puffed out in an instant. Overhead, underneath, before and behind—it is all the same.

Lord pity us!

We have just the time to dig up these wounded fellows and place them back against the wall for examination, when the relief is announced. They come, filing, into the Hades and grime,—ready to take up the work where we are leaving it. Fresh men, fresh thoughts—for the stale surroundings. Fresh courage to get out the wounded—fresh apathy toward the dead.

We quit the hell-hole with prayer on our lips—glad to get out into the midnight, over the fields, and away. We march to St. Jean. The straw is spread in the cantonments as usual—we are into this and asleep for a peaceful dawn.

The 6th of April a procession marches into St. Jean. Not

a gala fête or a celebration; not a riotous band. They are laying the dead away, in tent-cloth, in the simple cemetery of St. Jean, and the rifles speak with a military salute.

Following this it is announced that we have seen our last of Belgian soil. The whole company is elated.

"Let the Englishers have the Flanders front—*pas pour moi!*" Parisot shouts, throwing his *kepi* into the air. "Hurrah! We are off for France!"

This voices the disposition of all. They are willing enough to die for the *patrie*, but let it be on home soil, Almighty God!

We are carried out of St. Jean on the morning of April 9th in auto-busses from the boulevards of Paris.

"MADELEINE—BASTILLE—looky there!" shouts Parisot, pointing. And the sign is still tacked up in the front of the wagon.

"We are going to the *Madeleine!* We are going to the *Madeleine!*" shouts the section, cheering lustily. This is hearty! This is good!

All along the road are English troops going toward Ypres. These are the ones for our sector. We sing. We send jibes at them, and throw over *la croute*.\*

"*Tiens!* Look out for *marmites!*"

"*Hé, Tommy, take your totos along!*"

"*Frangin, what do they eat in London these days—French pastry?*"

"*Ma rosalie,*" sings another *poilu*, referring to the English bayonets, sword-edged in contrast to the French, which are shaped like a large stiletto. "Cut 'em up good, *Anglais*—sausage meat, you know!"

The auto-busses rattle into Herzeele, Department *du Nord*, and we are again lodged privately in some homes. It is about three in the afternoon. The days are longer and balmy with the forecast of Spring. The village has only two thousand inhabitants and they are most hospitable.

Parisot's usual good spirits are undergoing a dampening. He has not heard a word from St. Jean in all of three

\*The food.

days! The mails missed in Zonnebeke owing to the trouble in the trenches, and in St. Jean he was too dirty on the day of our arrival and too hurried on the day of departure to pay Juliette even a little visit. Parisot, were he a man of butter instead of brawn, would wring his hands. As it is, he laments: "She will, no doubt, forget me quickly. It is so with these young fair things. Their hearts are flotsam for the passing *soldat's* fancy, and mine is empty now. Oh, woe is me. *La mort soit douce!*"\*

"Have a cigarette," I offer, lighting a *seche*. "It will help you to forget this Juliette who seems so precious. Twenty days ago you did not know her—and you lived just the same."

"Lived?"

Such indignation!

"Never in my life! Never did I know what living was!"

"You will die just the same."

"Ah, that is it. I will die, and she—she——"

"She will marry somebody else," I say without hesitance. He gives me a look of scorn.

"You think? Well, guess again, *mon copain*. She will not—she will wait for me, that is a sure thing! I am not going to die—the *bon Dieu* looks out for that, and we will marry so soon the war is over!"

Broadly he smiles, and genially his spirits return, having convinced himself of her felicity. He draws 'round his canteen and takes a deep swallow of *pinard*. † "Ah, good!" he says, wiping his mouth, "she will love me yet and the war will soon be over."

Brave, big-hearted Parisot!

She may love you yet—as we all love you; but the war will not be over!

These are morbid thoughts.

"See here, have you had your *frichti* ‡ mooning here?" It is Felizé this time, who has missed us at the kitchen.

\*Death would be sweet.

†Wine.

‡Food.

"What is to eat?"

"*Ragout and punaises.*"

"*Punaises?*" We are turning up our noses. "*Punaises*" are bed-bugs, which is the *poilu's* slang for lentils, the small flat army beans that we are fed morning, noon and night. This diet becomes sickening.

"Never mind," says Parisot, "let it go. To-morrow I have a grand plan for something extra."

"Yes, and leave your '*affaire d'amour*' outside the house, if you please. I cannot stand Juliette with every meal."

He gives me a look and we both laugh and go in the house.

The next day Parisot is about early after the drill.

"Come along; we go to the fields." He links his arm through mine. "No Juliette this time—but *pissenlit*."

*Pissenlit* is dandelion salad, with which the fields are full at this time. We collect a large crop, rambling about, laughing like children.

The boys at the camp are gleeful. Several of them make up a splendid salad. But when it comes to the seasoning they are stumped. Who will go to the shop for oil and vinegar?

"Send Mueller!" somebody shouts.

A yell of laughter goes up. Mueller is the Alsatian whose dried herrings almost brought us to grief, and him to matrimony. He stands there, reddening like a school-girl; for, since his further acquaintance with the "*femme belligerent*," it was pretty serious for the boy.

"Not 'Hareng-Saur' "\*—his nickname, coined after the herring episode—"he forgets to come back; don't you, Mueller?"

"*Hé*, Mueller, do you think you can land a second?" jibes some one else.

The "Hareng-Saur" feels pretty miserable through all this.

"Here, I'll go," says Parisot, feeling a kindred spirit. He takes up a few sours here, there. By and by he is back with

\*Dried-Herring.

the seasoning. The Alsatian hails him before the house—out of ear-shot.

"Tell them, Parisot," he says, "that the shop-woman is a *belle dame sans scruple*. She is perfect—irresistible—you are in love with her already. She has charms—you have succumbed—so would they all!"

My *copain* is in at once on the joke.

"*M'ssieu's*," he says with grave solemnity, on entering, "you have conferred on me the greatest boon on earth. You have shown me the most beautiful of women! I am in love with her already—she is *charmante—glorieuse—irresistible!*"

"Where? Where?" comes a chorus of ready voices.

"In the shop, of course, *andouilles!*"

Out they go, clustered, leaping and swearing—each rushing with the speed of all his legs to the shop-woman; who, Parisot confides to me, is a grisly old dame of no less than eighty winters.

"It's a good one, Mueller," he chuckles to the Alsatian. "Come, we'll have the salad ready and eaten."

This we hasten to do. We make up a good portion each and the balance is put away behind a pork-barrel in the stable. These *poilus* are foxy fellows. They will immediately know a joke is played, and there will be no rest from the search.

In six or eight minutes they are back—swearing, guffawing. We are eating with crammed mouths out in the stable.

"Rest well, my *frangins*," says Parisot, sitting on the pork-barrel, "it serves them 'jol-lie well right.'" It is comical to hear Parisot trying to mimic the English.

They come filing out in the garden, "marching by one," and clamouring for revenge with every fibre.

"Nothing to serve, gentlemen," says Parisot, turning our plates upside-down. "We are sorry; you are too late."

"Late, is it! We show you who is late. That is a fine joke you perpetrate all right—how smart you are!"

They are about to pitch into us when an order comes, sharp, distinct:

*"Attention!"*

The column halts—swings around, cursing, but clicking the heels. We leap to our feet—Parisot from the pork-barrel, and it turns over.

"Ah—ha—ha—aa!"

Ringling laughter comes from a dozen throats as a company of Canadians bursts around the side of the barn, scrambling for the pickings, which they have evidently been taking fully in from a side-window. But they are not quick enough. In a flash the disillusioned *poilus* leap for the *pissenlit*—fasten on it, and bear it away triumphantly in the face of the tricksters. Disappointment sits on every face.

Seeing this, "Come—let us buy them a round of beer," I suggest to Parisot; and Mueller escorting, we march the "Tommies" off to the nearest *bistro*.\*

\*Drinking-house.

## IV

### ARRAS

**T**HIS soft life, so to speak, continues over a period of only one additional day. On the 14th we are hustled off afoot for Broxelles, through countryside rich with flooding sunlight and sweet-smelling earth. The tiny shoots are just greening on the trees, and moss raising underfoot. We quarter in a barn filled with straw. Very soon it starts to rain and develops a cataract through the roof. The *poilus* swear like fiends, scrambling about in the water, and each taking a soaking impromptu. It is a wonder, with all the hardships and dampness and poor drainage, that the illness is very scarce among the men. The skin becomes inured or impervious, or we are too intense while at battle to foment aches and pains.

At ten o'clock of the 15th day of April we arrive in St. Omer. The rain has eased up, the roads are steaming under the usual sun. We continue a steady march through the north of France and lodge in Wisernes, the small village a few miles beyond.

The farm upon which we quarter has fresh greens and milk and butter at reasonable rates. Parisot is blue as we are passing continuously farther from his "*amour*," without giving him necessary time to receive letters from her.

"Be glad you have a fresh egg and forget Juliette for a while," I coax him.

"It is you are too fresh!" he retorts. This is unusual from Parisot.

I glance at him keenly. His hair and moustache are unkempt, cheeks sallow and fallen in, and his eyes have a sunken look. Am I harrowed too, I wonder? Is it the life or love with him? He notices my scrutiny.

"Forgive me, my friend," he says, laying his hand on mine. "You are right, but it gets in the blood. We must be over with this thing (he means the war), and back to normal, or it wears us out. Look at me now—what am I? Wretched—unkempt—unwashed. An animal—a thing—not a man! You should see yourself. But there, let me not discourage you, my *copain*. The war is—the war. But you have not seen it the worst. Wait until Lens."

"You think we go to Lens?"

"*Mais, certainement!* Arras it is—you see. And plenty of fighting too."

That is all. He turns away. Not one word about Juliette. Not one word of his love or heart-hunger.

We march off to Fruges, and from there to Heuchin the next day.

The road leads through a narrow ravine. Suddenly every man is at attention—marching in regular and perfect formation. It is like a drill.

"What is it—review?" I question my *copain*.

"Exactly. The Staff is on the hill."

Sure enough, a group of officers, in the identical horizon blue of our own dusty, dirty uniforms, sits astride cavalry mounts on an adjacent slight rise of ground. One of their number—a little in advance of the others—sweeps the column with comprehensive eyes and a slight frown. His cape is thrown back from his shoulders. The day is warm. He sits soldierly, yet at ease, relaxed yet fully cognisant of his high position. His moustache uptilts slightly, tinged with grey. There is something regal in this man's appearance. We are not looking for autocracy in France, but we sigh audibly after passing before his scrutiny. It thrills! It makes one feel proud and ennobled, and, in some way, uplifted! We sense vaguely we are parading before a personality—a hero—an idol of the masses, and the tears come into the eyes and appreciation on the lips.

"General Foch," says Parisot, the all-knowing.

The poker has made good up the back! Each man, inspired, trudges his weary way—after distancing the Staff

—with less weariness and less complaint; with greater confidence and brisker stride. Not one of the unit drags or falls to the rear. Not one is picked up by the wagon. In appreciation of this the captain doles out a ration of beer to each—one half-litre.

Marching for the day, then, over, we lodge in Heuchin in a flour mill. It is amusing to see the *poilus* issue forth the following morning.

"Ghost! Spectre! Come out and shake yourself!" shouts Felizé, dragging me out in the daylight by the arm. I am snow-white from top to toe! We are, fortunately, by a river's bank, so the day proceeds with a wholesale washing of clothes; especially so, as the totes are more than evident. We sun our first batch, make a shift—bathing all over—and jump into these fresh things. After which it is simple to do up the remainder and graduate with a clean score before night-fall.

With the sun in long slant rays from the west and purpling the whole horizon east, Parisot and I go into the woods for violets. Strange occupation, this, for throat-cutters; but recall we have a lover in our midst, whose heart is urgent if his mail-pouch is light!

His sentiment is contagious. We gather a quantity of the posies and Parisot does them up in a little packet quite elaborately and addresses the whole to Mlle. Juliette Porquet, Rue E——, St. Jean. Perhaps this will cause him to sleep easier to-night. I know it will me!

We set forth again on the march following out a carefully worked plan of General Headquarters, it seems, and nearing the front at Valcomine before dawn. Hostile aircraft are riding overhead. We hear their motors before light, when they swoop pretty shallow; but dawn wings them all out of range. It is now possible to travel safely only at night. The country is wooded and swinging in hillocks, brave in Spring attire. Valcomine is only a small village, but there is a scarcity of water here more fitting an absolute Sahara! Even the café doors are locked. But in privacy—

that is to say, invading the various residences—we are offered *pinard* at a moderate cost, which is welcome.

Tramping by night and resting by day, we negotiate Frevin Capelle on the morning following. Here are wooden barracks acting as cantonments and built especially for the troops. It seems good to find something prepared in advance.

Discover us, then, in the north of Arras (Pas de Calais) on the 24th day of April, 1915. Frevin Capelle is a poor apology of a town. In fact, its chief charm, if such it may be called, lies in its rural surroundings. The water springs aplenty from the ground, and cresses, poking up the earth in bush formation, are in growth or blossom or bloom—whatever water-cress is, when in season.

Ecoivres stands along this same line of march; packed in pretty fully with regiments of soldiers belonging to our division, and quartering here.

Parisot is the first to discover an armoured train suggestively lounging on a temporary trackway close beside, and this gives him the idea he has been formulating since Ypres.

"We are coming in for a big attack—mark my words!"

He is borne out further in the morning when we are set at manœuvres and started toward Aubigny. The Colonial troops are encamped here—Zouaves, Tirailleurs, black fellows from the Soudan and Senegal, but not one in the gala attire of yore! All in sober khaki now—the flaming *chechias* hidden beneath a khaki band.

We are still in red pants! However concealed beneath a covering of blue overall. Some of our earlier boys, to be sure, are rewarded with dark-coloured velvet pantaloons. But the very first of the "*bleu horizon*"—the new sky-blue uniforms—spring into being with the *Classe 15*—young boys joining our regiment at Heuchin in the flour mill.

Returning from Aubigny, the captain assembles us all before him. "Well, how do you like your new steel helmets?" he demands of the company.

There is an impressive silence. Every one personally

feels guilty, having given the helmets a trial for their effectiveness and thrown them all away! This was in Ypres. The metal worn close on the head gave great discomfort.

The company plucks up courage to reply in concert: "They are miserable! We cannot wear them at all!"

"You have brought them back with you, I suppose?" he remarks with suspicion in his tone. "Not at all!" shouts Felizé, indignantly. "We threw them away!"

"So! Fine business!" says the captain, disgustedly, "You are extravagant '*piou-pious*,' and it would serve you all right if I sent you to the guard-house. School-boys! When anything does not suit you, you just throw it to the wind. Do you think France is made of money? Do you think the government can afford to waste? It is the same with the rice!"

Captain Niclausse continues:

"As long as we have *boni* in the company we buy all the *suplement* we can, but once let the money run out—well, it is rice or nothing—you starve!"

Papa Niclausse says this without rancour. He is big-hearted. Further, he is right. And he means by "*boni*" a small allotment of money given over to each company commissary or sergeant-major for extras, such as special foods, sweetmeats, choicer morsels. This is the "*suplement*" of the company. And when it runs down, assuredly we will have to fall back upon that abominable rice!

During bayonet drill in the afternoon we are prepared for action by the announcement that "big business" is brewing.

"We shall be in the trenches by May 1st," says Parisot; and he proves to be right.

In the glaring sunlight of high-noon on this day we are ordered out of Frevin Capelle and started toward the Bois d'Ecoivres. This is a small wood outside of the village of Ecoivres, and the soil is a peculiar yellow clay.

"In broad daylight!" is my comment, advancing toward the lines.

"But, of course, *copain*. We march by *boyau*," says Parisot, enjoying my astonishment. "Wait until you see

these little trenches. They are a marvel of the *genie*." \*

Just outside of the *Bois* is the first of these *boyaux*. It is a communication trench dug to a depth of probably one metre, 50 centimetres, and is 90 centimetres wide, with the earth dug out and heaped up on both sides, forming a double *parapet*.

We are walking now at right-angles to the front. No need to crouch—the *parapets* are an effectual screen to a man upright; and if the rifle is held barrel downward, hung through the arm, no evidence is presented of an enemy stalking. The *boyau* deepens as we progress, and twists and winds in little sharp curves to offer security from barrage fire. We proceed four kilometres (approximately 2½ miles), "marching by one." Other *boyaux* are criss-crossing, communicating obliquely with other communication trenches—the whole sketching labyrinthian over a maze of landscape. In order to distinguish one from the other they are named appropriately—and comically like city streets: "Parallele de Nancy," the "Tranchée de St. Eloi," etc. The first of these marks the second, or reserve, line of trenches, and bisects the latter—our *boyau*—a certain distance from the actual front.

It is four o'clock before we are up with the first line and in a position to relieve the troops there. Several of these—older men, between 40 and 45 years of age—greet us in a sort of semi-whispered camaraderie:

"You have a good sector here, boys—it is as quiet as home-sweet-home."

Parisot assures me this will not be for long. "Offensive is coming and we will be in the thick of it," he says. "I know it—I feel it! Why, otherwise, should they have sent for the 'Division de Fer de Toul'?"

Parisot is very proud of the Iron Corps.

This trench, now on inspection, is a solid-built wonder that puts the Ypres line to shame. Warm weather has baked the soil into hard and fast granite, which is as spruced and clean as if a broom were brought into play

\*Engineering corps.

hourly. It is like a hotel-lobby. The *boyaux* are smooth and level enough for a cycle-track. Astonishing!

"These fellows passed a better winter than we," Parisot comments. "No doubt they ate warm food because the kitchens can be reached in broad daylight."

"Yes," I reply, "and, furthermore, the ground is dry. There will be no more freezing in water to the knees—no more mud and filth. We can be in comfort for the balance of the year."

Parisot looks at me in wonder. What kind of war do I think this is, he is undoubtedly thinking—a stalemate, a war of words? But I have learned to expect nothing until something starts.

I find the first-line trench, then, as solid as Helgoland—as fortressy as the old-régime Bastille. The *guitounes* are splendidly ensconced, hidden and secure, but there are too few of them. We are a larger relief than the former. Parisot, Felizé and myself set to work with our small tools to construct an *abri* for ourselves.

From the captain's observation post I have a good view across to the German lines. They are here all of a hundred and fifty metres from ours. The entanglements are reinforced more rigidly than in Flanders—wire mesh crossing and counter-crossing in dubious fashion, interminably winding and setting up a solid formation of barrier.

When even falls we divide the watch in rotation. Each of us is thereby enabled to dig the *cachibi* a little deeper.

The ration or consignment of food in French is called "*ravitaillement*." At dawn a squad of our boys start forth, passing through a *boyau* to the rolling kitchens which are just at the end. Up comes the steaming coffee,—soup! Sweet change, this, from the icy order of *frichti* in Belgium. We divide into squads, certain of us going for *ravitaillement* with each meal. This equally exposes each man to danger, whether from shrapnel spraying and breaking in the *boyau*, or shells screaming over into the trench.

Parisot lets out a whoop! This is unexpected from him. We are cautioned to whisper only in the front line, other-

wise the listening post of the enemy—the “*poste d'écoute*”—will pounce upon some stray phrase and use it in disadvantage to us—the watch being changed, a relief or offensive; which gives him an opening for attack.

Parisot has received—a letter from Juliette!

He rushes over to the half-finished *cachibi*, crawls in where no prying eye, though probable cave-in, may catch him, and settles down to read.

Felizé, not being in on the secret, frowns and taps at his forehead. He is expectant that his dear comrade has gone mad.

“What ails him, Americain? Has his *gnole*—— You know, is he affected?” But it is something besides brandy that has gone to his head.

“*Babillarde*,” \* I remark, lighting up a *seche*: “*Babillarde* from St. Jean.”

“Ah!”

The eyebrows of my friend go up. Was there ever a Frenchman to whom an “*affaire*” did not appeal?

“Who is she? *Dis-moi?*”

I shake my head.

“Parisot in love,” he murmurs. “Well, that is the first time I have known it—in him.”

Felizé has been an acquaintance of my *copain* for many years in Epinal.

“Is she fair or dark?” he persists.

I turn away, laughing. Who am I that I should give away Parisot’s secrets? But Felizé persists, clutching me by the shoulder, whispering in my ear: “*Dis-moi!*”

“Well—dark, then,” I retort, “but speak to him yourself if you want to know.”

“It is not that, *frangin*,” he says, slowly. “But I have a sister—you—you see. She—well, she really lost her head about this fellow. He loved her like a—a good comrade; and she like a—well, otherwise. It is a bad situation. My sister writes him too. Is this from Epinal—or St. Jean? Are you sure?”

\*Letter.

"'St. Jean,' he says to me."

He nods, troubled.

"I don't know, but I think it is quite severe."

"Who did you say was the girl?" he enquires for the twentieth time.

"Papa Porquet's daughter in the Rue E——. But do not, Felizé, on any account——"

He turns away. Parisot is coming towards me. He frowns, winks to me once or twice, and, at the first opportunity, takes me over to the *guiroune*.

"Here—read it!" he says, pressing his *babillarde* into my hand.

"Your letter? Why should I read your letter?"

"Read it!"

"Not on any account!"

"Silly!" he retorts, "There is nothing in it."

"Well, if you feel that way."

The letter commences in a gentle sort of way:

"*Cher ami*, this will reach you as you are on the road to France—undoubtedly forgetting me, or, at least, believing that I am forgetting you. But, as you see, I am not. I write you at the very earliest moment. I write you, although you did not think it worth while to bid me—with all your former protestations—a good-bye. My friend, I do not reproach you. Why should I? Why, indeed, should we blind one another any longer—my heart goes away with some one else, and yours—well, I presume yours is in France, in Epinal, where it belongs . . ."

Both of these statements occasion me the greatest wonder. I look at Parisot . . .

"Go on—go on!" he urges.

". . . forgive me, friend *et soldat*, for this confession: I saw one of her letters to you. It fell from the pocket. I would not have taken it, of course, for the world . . ."

"Cristi!" mutters Parisot under the breath, kicking at the *parados* with his boot.

"Well, that is the explana——" I commence.

"Go on, *espece d'andouille!* If you stop another time, *je te casse en deux,\** so help me Heaven!"

"As for my heart—he neither knows nor cares, who has become master of it for life. Let this console you, then, if indeed you need consolation, never having loved where you proclaimed you did! If he is well, I am happy—*votre camarade*, you know whom I mean. Will you, can you write me—just a line? I dare not ask *him*. My hopes for your good health and the continued success of your company . . . Sincèrement . . .

JULIETTE P."

I hand Parisot his letter, shrugging; not understanding all of it, and little caring.

He smiles: "What do you think?"

A diabolical smile is on his lips instead of sorrow. One would think he would mourn. He seems, rather, inclined to laugh. He folds the pages and slips them into his pocket—sniffs, draws them out again and hands the packet to me.

"You might as well answer it."

"What for I? Answer your own mail."

"Ah—ha—ha, that is a good one—what for you!" He bursts out into a good round laugh. Several of the boys look astonished and grin and lift their eye-brows. The *caporal* frowns and touches him on the shoulder.

"Close your trap!" he orders.

"Pah!" rejoins Parisot, shaking him off, "Get away, *cabot*. The *boches* don't care for small dogs—only large ones!"

He refers to the nickname of the *caporal*. We call him "*cabot*" which means a small dog which every one kicks about—which barks but does not bite. The *caporal* is in

\*I break you in two!

just this position between the dictates of his officers and jibes of his men.

"Quiet!" orders the *sous-lieutenant*, passing through.

"You answer the letter—she wants to hear from you," persists Parisot, lowering his voice.

"From me? You are crazy! What have I to do with Juliette?"

"She is in love with you!"

"Pah!" I have a hard time keeping in my laughs.

"See here—see!" He opens the letter again. "She says she loves you!"

"Go away—you are crazy! Absolutely, Parisot, I think Felizé is right—you are affected!" I touch my forehead, reaching for my *fusil*. It is time to change watches. He grips me by the arm.

"Really, I am in earnest, Americain. The girl has lost her heart. If you will not write her—I must."

"Do it—do it! But leave me absolutely out! If you mention it again, I will kill you!"

A *marmite* comes over with a shriek, exploding ten or twelve metres over, hurling earth and small bits of metal over on our roof. The tick-tick and clump! comes down like hail and a landslide, but the *abri* remains in perfect condition. Parisot stretches up and peers about the trench.

"Fritz is getting busy," he says. "Well," yawning, "if you feel that way, it is a pity to waste good sentiment on you. I will write Julie——"

His voice trails off as I advance to the *creneau*. I am relieving Felizé, who has been relieving somebody else.

"What does he say? Is he very much smitten?"

Clunk! Whroarr!

Another *marmite* breaks up the ground *entre les lignes*; rifles snapping after this fitfully. I fire a couple of rounds myself through the shooting-hole.

"No. He is not smitten at all. And—really—I am disappointed in Parisot. I thought he had a heart," I retort. I am about as indignant as I can be. I have shown Juliette no attention whatever. "Your sister is far too good for that

'*morceau de fromage*!'<sup>\*</sup> I advise you to write and tell her so at once."

He is astonished because I am so earnest.

"What is the matter?"

"*Nom d'un chien!* Don't ask me—I am mad!"

He goes away wondering.

The idea turns over and over in my head, what have I to do with that Julie in St. Jean? I have spoken to her three times probably in my life. Parisot is a fool—an idiot——

Tssseee!

"*Planquez-vous!*"

Whroarr!

The shell screams overhead—buries itself behind the *parados*.

In the evening we are put to work enlarging the main *boyau*—the *Boyau d'Evacuation*, widening it out from ninety centimetres to a metre and twenty centimetres. This is the passage for wounded soldiers, and a grim prediction of the coming offensive is in the work.

We are relieved on the 4th of May. The 153rd Regiment comes in to take our sector and we retire as far as Ecoivres, eat a pan of *bidoche* † and army bread, deposit our belongings, with the exception of *fusil* and *cartouches*, in a stable there; and start off again for the front. We have picks and shovels, and are called upon to dig what is known as the "*Parallele du Depart*." This is a trench between the lines before the main *parapet*, and ahead of the wire entanglements. It is prepared in advance of an advance; occupied by troops who are leading the attack. But first it must be constructed.

The *genie* have initiated things by tunnelling every fifty metres beneath the wire entanglements, which lets us pass without observation from the front line trench actually into No Man's Land!

The night is inky black and without a breeze or fog. We are cautioned to be mute as we value our lives, and it

<sup>\*</sup>Piece of cheese.

<sup>†</sup>Meat.

is not necessary to repeat the warning. Issuing out into that solitude so tense with listeners, so pregnant with mischief—it is a weird and uncanny experience and one full of dangers and fortitude. We lay our rifles on the sod and start in with the picks and shovels. Each man knows his task and sets to work to be over with it as rapidly and noiselessly as possible. The occasional rifle blares—barks. The usual bullets hum. It is singular chance to which we can lay our lives.

After a half-hour of this work, some man speaks low. It is probably only a whisper, but it punctuates the silence horribly. Instantly there is a stir—one feels rather than hears it—a whistle—a light flares up from the Teuton side—a *fusée éclairante*!

As the rocket leaves, with one accord we cast ourselves flat on the ground, breathing in earth, and the pulse racing up like mad! Mitrailleuses flare into action. A *rafale* of bullets comes singing through the night. Streams of these pass on over, and one or two of our men shriek and then moan. Somebody rises to his feet. He is immediately whisked off and flattened to earth again, crying loudly! The firing continues while the light lasts; when, having satisfied themselves that we are devastated for the night, peace descends upon the Teuton camp once more.

We go to the work and the parallel widens and deepens. Six of our men are wounded in thighs and groins, and one is dead. It is he who stood up, silhouetted in flame and shell.

At three, dawn floods up and we pass through the tunnels and back to Ecoivres. How long and beautiful the days are getting! Streams of sunlight perish the shades of night. A misty vapour ascends and leaves clearness and beauty on the sod everywhere. Verdure is spreading under this.

We lodge in a barn. Packed together like swine inside, too many men for one hole, the straw is filthy rotten and alive! Vile contrast to the glories of nature! The hay is smelly with manure. It must have been requisitioned

clear from a stall—under the horse's belly and hoofs and swarming with totos. Millions of these vermin, virulent creatures, are nestling and breeding and bedizening our velvety couch.

"Parisot!" I shudder, "you do not expect to sleep in that, surely?"

He shrugs.

"War is——"

"No, totos are not war, my friend, and if you want to remain here, why do so! But not I!"

I grab my tent-cloth and make a break for the open air. Parisot and Felizé, laughing heartily at "our crazy American," follow after.

"Right," says Parisot to our other friend, designating me. "He has not such crazy notions after all. A *bachot*\* in the open is far preferable to that."

At these words a large shell tears up a furrow a rod sway, whistling by my head and exploding with viciousness.

"*Hé! Il est moins cinq!*" Felizé shouts; and indeed it has "missed me by an inch." "Are you so smart, my friend, that you must sleep in the prairie?"

"No matter. I prefer that to slow death by the totos. I don't worry about sauce-pans—come on!" I respond, marching straight ahead. Parisot shrugs in his usual non-committal fashion. We pitch our tent-cloths in the open; and before long the entire company is lodged outside, under protest of the captain and lieutenants.

With the falling of night comes fresh labour at the *parallele*. It is fairly deep and protective after this. Have the Teutons no notion of our advancement? Not an extra shell is extended during the entire process. Day follows night and night follows day with intermittent tasks. Returning from the *parallele*, it is to swallow a *quart de jus* † in order to remain awake and energetic, and a first-class job at the big spring near Ecoivres. We are ordered to fill hogsheads with water which are then transferred to the *py-*

\*Bed.

†One-fourth of a litre of black coffee.

*lones.* These are second-line trenches, filled with reserve stock.

By high noon of the 5th day of May these labours are completed and we are released to a much-needed rest. Under the warm sun, reclining in prairie-tents, it is balm to a war-racked frame; for, although I have been in no actual offensive up to this date, I have been subjected to horrors and terrors I did not deem compatible with a human consciousness. I seem to mellow now with the harmony of nature, never more poignant than on this borderline of shadow—to fit into her mood, to give myself up to her luxury, and I slumber 'neath the sweet spring skies.

They rout us out by evening with the picks, and it is to finish the *Boyaux d'Evacuation* for the wounded men. This is deepened and widened and tamped down hard, making a broad even passageway to the first dressing station. We are about to retire, with a sigh of satisfaction, when, without warning, there comes a sprinkle, then a rain—out of a clear sky! It is not shrapnel nor *marmites*, but truly enough slushy, sticky rain that makes of the *boyau* a muddy pasty trough.

This is abominable. Curses, imprecations, fill the air! And with each fresh shovelful of the slush comes a cave-in from above, filling the trench and clogging the tools with clay. The storm rises like a tropical hurricane blowing over the whole terrain now; shrieking, whisking and fluttering the tent-cloths, carrying away *kepis* from the *guitounes*, drenching the men and bedeviling the trenches. We are caught in the utterly black night, cut off from commanding officers, and under orders to improve the *boyau*. There is nothing for it but to remain at work. Until two in the morning we struggle, chilled to the bone, running with water and mud.

I hear a sharp exclamation behind me.

"What is it, Parisot?" I say. He has thrown aside his shovel and picks up his gun, and I see him just in the flare of a *fusée*, rubbing his hands with mud from the barrel, on his *falzar*.

"*J'en ai mare!*" he exclaims irritably and loudly; and this is immediately echoed by the entire company, who throw away their tools with one accord.

"We are tired of it! We are tired of it!" They take their rifles in their hands. "We are here to fight, not dig graves."

"*Tiens!* In two minutes we will be dead men!"

"There! You see—there it starts again!"

They refer to the *marmites* which are beginning to sing.

"Fritz is waking up. Let's go out and fight!"

Not one of us has actually the idea of leading an attack without orders. But that standing in clammy damp with cataracting water flooding down has jostled all the submission out of us.

Parisot realises he has awakened these rebellious thoughts.

"Come," he says, soothingly, "it does no good to complain. Take your tools," he suits the action to the words, "*marchez par un—allez!*"

He starts off down the *boyau*, and the men, falling in, but grumbling fretfully, follow in his footsteps, wringing wet.

Suffice it to say—we are not reproached. Our officer, a *sous-lieutenant*, has fallen before a shell; but so deathlike is it in those solitudes along the front, that even a passing soul is challenged without a word! We are entitled to rest until mid-day on the day following. This is a supreme concession, considering the offense, but Captain Niclausse is a humane animal at heart.

When the rain is through, we are through with our sleeping too. We are re-sent to the *boyau* and there remake the chiselled walls of the trench. On the 7th we graduate into stevedores again. From grave-diggers to pack-animals, and back again, and back again! Oh, it is patriotic, it is inspiring war-work, I tell you!

We shoulder crates and boxes of explosives—grenades, *croquillots*, *torpilles*. A thousand and one small biff-bangs, any one of which is calculated to blow you off the side of the earth with less effort than it takes to breathe.

Excited? Not we—we drudge! We feel as if we could welcome some such nerveless *exeunt*, with each straining

load upon the back. But labour begets its reward. Every detail arranged, France is ready to launch her grand attack!

The schedule calls for offensive work on the 9th. The weather plays in with us and clears, leaving an open sky and a warm and brilliant day. Our blankets are stored back in Ecoivres, and all extra clothing wrapped individually and stored away, labelled, in the company wagons.

The *Classe* 1915 is composed of rather young boys. They are new to the game. The balance of the troops of the "*Division de Fer de Toul*" are seasoned veterans by this time—old-timers, and *copains et frangins*.

At this time, just on the eve of the Allied offensive, with the air tense and every muscle of every participant on the *qui vive*, I come to know a soldier, who, by his utter lack of imagination, earns the sobriquet of "La Terreur." He is a tall, gaunt Parisian—extremely tall and extremely gaunt, who hails from the Villette.\*

He has few friends though his sense of humour is exorbitant, few admirers though his bravery is conspicuous, few enemies though his tongue is a whip-lash. He is generally accepted as one of the "*loastringue dingo*"—that is, crazy nuts—if not their star performer; and hesitates before neither love of God nor fear of the devil to perform what he will, how he will when he will.

"La-Terreur" towers over the trenches so his head is constantly in danger, yet some potent force pulls him through scatheless. We are thrown, from this day of May 9th onward in Arras, Champagne and the Vosges, together like two *copains*, though we never become them. It is as strange to be *copain* with this man as to be bed-fellow with a lizard. Not that he is slippery or unclean—he is one of the cleanest men in the company—but because of his queer hare-brained ways, or, rather, his absolute lack of imagination, which is sensibility or soul. He is not an automaton—he thinks! He is not an *andouille*—he is

\*A faubourg of Paris where the slaughter houses are, consequently a rough district and one which breeds the type of citizen known as the French Apache.

clever! He should be an officer, but is not! Where to define him, to classify him, or how, is beyond me. I am interested, and absorbed—but not feelingly drawn toward him. There are men who have to owe their lives to him, but in this he is not even concerned. He owns no emotion; lacks any sentiment. “La-Terreur” will be an interesting character in the history of the Iron Division, I feel sure.

*The Battle of La Targette and Neuville St. Vaast*

On the 8th of May in the year 1915, our captain and commanding officer, Papa Niclausse, a strict but kindhearted man who is an officer of the active army—not reserve—and, therefore, more to be relied on, gathers us together with strict injunctions regarding the honour of our company and the corps, but particularly the *patrie*.

“See here,” he says, “we are leaving for death or glory. If there is a man among you cowardly enough to hesitate let the poltroon be struck down ere he corrupt the name of the Iron Division! France’s noble sons must rally to the flag. *‘On les aura—les boches!’*”

These are solemn words, but inspiring. A cheer breaks out among the men, who cannot contain themselves:

*“On les aura—les boches!”*

We get them, then! Forward!

We leave Ecoivres and come up to the first-line trenches by ten o’clock. The men on duty there are thus relieved and repair back to the base for rest and quiet. We are the attacking troops. My blood stirs. We face the first of our exaggerated hardships by sleeping on the damp soil.

I awaken at three, just before the light of dawn, chilled to the marrow, volunteer for the *ravitaillement*, and go back to Ecoivres for food.

The bombardment, prelude to the attack, has already commenced. The heavy guns are in action. We gather their rumble and detonation passing the *Bois d’Ecoivres*, and the reverberations roll ’round and ’round, resounding through the village and behind the prairie, over to the hills.

It is the 9th of May. Five o'clock has already struck of this mad morning. What will be the evening? Who will be dead? Who alive? This *copain*—this companion at my side—will he live, breathe, drink, eat and sleep, or will his carcass rot, bleeding with the elements that cry out for God and are echoed with Hell's mockery? Shall I walk or shall I—lie? And will others walk with me? And, if so, to what? To where? Who is opposing this? God? So these poor *boches* claim, as sincere in their convictions, no doubt, as we.

Well, we will murder them. And they—they will murder us. And so the carnage begins one hour after we are back again. The cannonading at this time has risen into cataclysm. Shrill shells are screaming overhead, ploughing lanes through the sky in which the air whistles and breaks. *Crapouillots* and *torpilles* wing over, fully visible.

The 75s are close behind us. The voice of these is clear—like a bark, and dry. The 90mm. are behind them, and the 240s ranging far, far back, in the *Bois*, and grumbling fearsomely. It is peculiar with this thunder. The rocking of the earth seems in conjunction with it; therefore if I close my eyes, I am on a ship, and the ship is swinging, lurching—the waves smashing, tumbling us loosely like on top of the crest of a spurting volcano. Deep growls issue out of the ground. Wild heaves come imaginary from underfoot. The air tears. The sky sobs. Things rock and heave, and the heavens belch.

My company is eating with the usual ravenous appetite. We have canned beef—*boite de singe*, and *bricheton*,\* and a good round ration of *pinard* † and *gnole*,‡ especially so much of the last that every one grows warm and happy.

"What is the good of war if one cannot drink all they want?" shouts "La-Terreur," gulping whole draughts of a superior quality that he bought from some *vintegeurs* in Ecoivres. It is a luscious stuff and he gives me just a swal-

\*Bread.

†Wine.

‡Brandy. Slang for brandy.

low. He has paid large money for it and reserved it for the last.

"Who knows—you may be dead to-morrow!"

It is always *you*, not *him*, with "La-Terreur." "You can take a little, but if it is a lot, I will kill you!"

We share our *pinard* more or less in common, taking it all out of the canteens to lighten the load, dividing the "*flotte*"\* instead. After this is drunk, Captain Niclausse comes around with more of it. Strong stuff, this, of the officers'. *Sous-lieutenant* Lacaverne sends a quantity down the line. We grow hilarious—excited. We long for action—to rise to the attack. The shells crash and rumble, churn up earth and bury themselves over the way in Fritz's dugout. Strange noises commence to issue from the trenches. Orders come briskly. The rifles snap out bullets. The eyes at the *creneaux* are commencing to blur and tongues to loosen.

"If we do not go now," says Parisot, "they might as well call it off. *Mille diables!* I could kill fifty *boches*!"

"You? You could kill none!" laughs Felizé.

"I show you!"

"Where is your *fusil*?"

Parisot raises it from the *parados*, where it has been leaning. The clay from the *Boyau d'Evacuation* caked in here pretty badly and the *culasse* † is jammed.

"Why don't you look after your rifle? If *cabot* sees that, he gives you h——!"

Parisot examines it half-drunkenly, trying to manage his fingers to clean it out. He mutters: "Who cares about *cabot*; he is nothing—is nothing. I get those *boches*. I show you—you watch."

Felizé is laughing in a slobbery manner and begging the Parisian for more wine. "La-Terreur" gulps deeply, his eyes widening. He holds the bottle high to drain every drop.

Ping—crrrrack!

\*Water.

†Breech-block.

The glass flies into smithereens, splintering all over him. Several of the *poilus* drop down on the trench floor laughing.

"Stick your head over, it goes the same!" snorts Parisot. He can scarce be heard with the din that is boiling.

I am swimming around in my head. Unreal is the talk—sight—clamour. These lines of soldiers fingering their guns—those laughing few, who are reeling and demanding action. The noise grows more furious—my head rebels—throbs. I am myself longing for some action. Anything—occurrence—movement! Will we never start? The command—

The sun draws up, hovering, spreading. Deep beams strike against the land—glint the metal. Everything sparks and snaps before my eyes. I feel bouyed up. I am very strong—superhuman! I can carry the whole works. Nothing can stand before me. No German can live! I can break him with my hands—he cannot stop me! Action—action—

The sun glares, flooding with exaggerated warmth the whole tense inferno. It steams underneath. Red, heating breezes, and a flash of gold, pass over the sky. "La-Terreur's" swollen eyes are belching coals—his face ruddying. He breathes by gulps. The trench is hot with fumes. Alcohol deadens as it starts to life. Our sensibilities are dull-edged, but the thought is keen—we must attack! Kill! KILL! Stab—blow the brains out—murder—red—

On the right is the 1st Regiment of the "Legion Etrangers,"\* the Zouaves and the Moroccan Division. On our left the 11th Division of Nancy. Our own breasts form the centre and heaviest attacking column. Before us is the village of La Targette—our first objective. By heavy storm, which is direct assault—hand to hand conflict—we expect to gain this.

By nine the captain has distributed to each man a cigar.

"Face Fritz, *mes enfants*, with a cigar in the mouth. It lends courage," he says. "Likewise we show them we

\*Foreign Legion.

don't care—not one of us, for his d——d *marmites!*"

More *pinard*, more eau de vie.\* The head is swimming—the heart swelling!

The captain's voice again, ringing, clear:

"*Huitieme Companie, sac au dos, bayonette au canon, et suivez derriere moi!*" †

At this instant I feel a peculiar shudder pass all over my body. It ripples down my spine, catching me by the throat, stifling my breath! A moment my heart lurches, clutches—I tremble like a leaf. My hands juggle the rifle. I am afraid they will drop it. Every muscle relaxes—every nerve sings. My head grows hot—seems bursting! On—on to that inferno? Shells bursting in the parapet shower a litter of dirt and débris over us all. Men are screaming—moaning. On—on into that?

"*Suivez—moi!*"

Captain Niclausse is leading on before us—into the little tunnel under the entanglements which leads to the *Parallele du Depart*. The men follow after—at his heels. My turn! I draw breath—plunge ahead, men crowding behind me. Wooden ladders are placed against the *parapet* of the *Parallele* every ten or fifteen metres. We surge through, down the temporary trench, and are ready to advance. At nine-fifteen comes the order:

"*En avant, mes enfants—c'est pour la France!*" ‡

The scene is indescribable. It becomes grandiose. Action takes the place of morbidity. We spring up the ladders—but they are too slow. The blood boils—demands instant, clamorous energy! Those on top reach down, clutching the hands of those below—dragging them up by main force—setting them on their feet *entre les lignes*. The whole company goes over in one scramble—up—up, *mes copains!* That scene has acted like a stimulant on my spirit—I become inspired!

\*Brandy.

†Eighth Company, knapsack to shoulder, bayonet to rifle, and follow behind me.

‡Forward, my children—it is for France!

Over the *parapet* we are in a clover field. Sweet, dew-crested clover, the scene of bloodshed! One hundred and fifty metres beyond lie the German lines—we have three advances to make of fifty metres each, orders being to flatten down between each advance. The machine-guns spitting at us can rake us down with each step. We are to cross as rapidly as possible—not running—but walking at a brisk pace, keeping a straight line, and lying down, and rising and advancing and lying down again.

Once outside the trench the bullets commence to whistle. Mitrailieuses start a steady thrum, pouring flaming lead in our way—the rifles of the enemy come into action. I start across the clover-patch, with the spouting jets across as a guide. Our artillery leaves off its close curtain and throws a barrage on the second-line Teuton reserves. The noise is deafening. A screaming shell comes close—is gone!

The little *caporal* of my *escouade* pitches forward.

"Oooh! I am touched!" he shrieks.

Twenty-five metres—and he is gone! *Cabot*—gone!

We advance thirty more. Flat—everybody! Not a word is spoken—everybody like an automaton—every one flat! Every one, that is, but—"La-Terreur." He stays upright—he kneels.

The captain shouts over: "*Espece d'Abruti! Tu va te faire bouziller comme un fou!*"\*

He replies: "I cannot lie down because I lost the cork of my canteen and it is full of *pinard!*"

I hear him over the din, and he says: "Americain, supposing we empty it. God knows, you may be killed by the *boches!*"

I, of course, not he. That is his philosophy. But I take him good-naturedly and drink the wine.

Up we are again—up and loping across the field—another fifty metres.

"Ah, God!" shouts a man on the right. The machine-guns get him. He spins, his rifle flying wide and nearly

\*Can't you lie down like everybody? You will get killed like a fool!

levelling another man, before he pitches headlong and we leave him—lying flat!

We are across the stretch. A young voice says: "Help! I am wounded!" Then cries out, sobbing—lying there and sobbing. It is a boy—one of the *Classe 15*.

"Where are you wounded, my lad?"

"In the back. Oh, help me!"

"I cannot," I reply. "Stay where you are. If you move, you die!" The mitrailleuses are thundering. If I move a finger, they have me! *Planque to trogne!*\* As soon as we are in the German trenches the machine-guns will be silenced, then if you can walk, go back and save your life."

No sooner said, these words, when he moans.

"Oh," he says, writhing up on his elbows, stretching up his head as if he were in the greatest agony, "oh, I suffer," sobbingly, "I suffer so; I cannot stand it. Oh, good-bye, I have to die!" His voice chokes. A shriek pierces the morning air—he drops flat. A bullet has caught him in the brain.

There are moans and screams now on every hand—with each flash of the rifles. We scramble up—advance. The *commandant* (major) goes out—the *capitaine* falls, badly wounded. We advance farther. Men are staggering—reeling everywhere. . . . One machine-gun battery is still in action—directly ahead; all the others silenced by our artillery. An order comes over from the left:

"The last half-section to the right, advance through the wire and silence that gun!"

The last half-section includes Parisot, Felizé, "La-Terreur" and myself. We plunge ahead with the sergeant before us. He drops like a stone, head foremost. We go over him like beasts enraged, wild to tear through—blood-lust on us all! The entanglements are twisted and partly shattered from our batteries. We smash and hack our way through, tearing what is left with the butt end of our *fusils*. My *falsard* is torn—our *capotes*—Parisot hacking and cursing.

\*Down with your head.

"*Bande de vaches!*" he yells. "*Bande de vaches!*"\*

We drop into the German trenches, "La-Terreur" in the lead—I second. Parisot is following so close, his body is rubbing against mine. A *pare eclats* † interrupts the trench at this point, closing us off from view of the machine-gun outfit on the opposite side. In this way we are upon them before they are aware. Dead bodies sling across the *parados*. Lying in pools of blood and water, ghastly heads and arms stumped off at the elbows and wrists, confront us. The legs of a *maccobé* ‡ reach straight up from the waist as he lies half-buried in clay, balanced in upright position by a shovel. "La-Terreur" strikes against this shovel. Immediately there is an explosion followed by tons of earth, it seems, crumbling on our heads!

"*Diable!* A death-trap!" he exclaims, springing back. "The *boches* have connected this up with wires!"

Over the broken bodies we clamber—straight into the face of the defenders. Three are left, manning the mitrail-leuse. They throw up their hands.

"*Kamarades Franzose!*"

The appeal comes too late. Until the very moment that we emerged from the *pare eclats*, the machine-gun was still spitting fire and destruction into the heart of our troops.

"La-Terreur" roars: "*Au diable!*"—jamming his bayonet through the belly of the first. A long, deep groan issues from him; he puts his hands to the hilt where it connects with the rifle, and sinks, his eyes bulging. Fearful sight!

I turn to the centre one. He wears eye-glasses, and his face is rotund and red. I bring my rifle down across his head with force and a long spurt of blood shoots out and up in the air! The crunching impact leaves me weak, and sickened with fear. I back up—there is an overpowering desire to flee—panic—but Parisot is behind me, shoving for-

\*Herd of cows!

†Circular, indented parapet every few metres in a front-line trench.

‡Dead man.

ward—yelling like a demon! He brings his gun to his shoulder and fires with accuracy directly into the huge, gasping mouth of the third German, blowing the top of his head clean off!

We leap to positions in the trenches that are built up with sand-bags and signal the company, spread out flat on the field, to advance. They come on with a roar! "La-Terreur," meanwhile, discovers a packet of cigarettes and some matches on a shelf and adopts both.

"Fritz is not such a bad fellow," he says coolly, lighting a *seche*, and offering one to me, "he leaves us a smoke." The trench seems to be in our hands in this sector and our artillery is preparing the way further ahead. The *sous-lieutenant* comes over with a rush, a rifle in his hands like any *poilu*.

"Boys," he pants, "let us go on to the village."

The village is only twenty metres away. We are after him toe-to-heel. The entire company streams behind, anxious for further fighting. The trench is running parallel to the highway connecting Arras and Bethune and leading into La Targette. Already littered with the bodies of dead *boches*, slaughtered by the inferno of shells, we leap the *parados* and fall literally in their midst. Such a havoc—such a butchery—such a stench! The whole village reeks with blood. The ill-paved streets are slippery under the bright light, and huddled masses attest the zeal of the 240s. Here a soldier without a head—here head without torso. Rifles—grenades—lie everywhere, splintered, driven into the mud.

We come at it hand-to-hand with the survivors! They are brawny, muscular fellows, with spiked helmets and fierce countenances. They know no quarter—receive none. Our grenades are useless. Too slow. We throw them away—attack the houses—nests of snipers!—batter in the doors with the butts of our *fusils*! They go down with a crash, resounding, a cloud of dust rising—swearing voices curse us into h—, hurling epithets indescribable to the tongue!

There is a whistle beside my ear, and I duck in time to avoid a flare of bullets from the roof of the house adjoining—a tile-roofed, squat abode. The snipers have smashed off parts of these and are firing through.

"We get them!" shouts Parisot, leading. We scramble up the steps and hammer the door. Across the street is another rifle contingent blazing at us. It is a race with death. Either we get in, or are murdered outside!

"*Dieu!*" A bullet takes the skin off my *copain's* third finger, leaving it streaming with blood. "I get them for that!" he shrieks, battering with all his strength. The door gives in! We leap up the stairs, into the muzzles of five long *Mausers*!

Ping—Tzing!

They go off with a crash and the floor seems to come up! Parisot is lying on top of me, and we are unhurt. A form leaps over—tall, ungainly, followed by others, coming in at our door, firing as good as they get from the quartet upstairs. "*La-Terreur*" kneels on the stairs directly before us and is peppering the Germans with a hail of lead as they retreat from the stair-top. Back—back—they are backing up; and now, reinforced, we start in pursuit, pouring in slugs all the way.

A regular abattoir greets us on the stair-top. Three of the *boches* are lying, soaking in blood. The fourth crouches in a corner, his hands over his face.

"*Kamerades Franzose!*" says a voice coming from behind us. We whirl around. A handsome German officer steps from a closet, helmet in hand.

"*Je vais t'en foutre, sale vache!*" shouts "*La-Terreur*," blinded by madness, stabbing at him with his bayonet. The officer goes down with a smash, clear over the railing of the stairs, eighteen feet to the floor below. He lies there huddled and inert. We strike out right and left as other skulking forms appear, everybody seeking for mercy—nobody getting any.

We are half-crazed with lust—like demons, killing to kill, fighting to fight! I fire into the chest of the German op-

posite, crouched in the corner, and he gurgles and rises to his feet, reeling. Felizé finishes him! We have cleaned up that rendezvous of wrath then. No single live enemy remains. Outside the artillery duel is increasing. The house rocks. Jar follows crashes that tilt us over and seem to raise us and set us upright again. The thunder strikes close, rolls and splinters the ear-drums, falls away into silence—breaks again with a clashing noise outside—redoubles, flares louder forth—detonates!

"La-Terreur," Parisot and Felizé start for the street, shouting. I attach a small red flag to my bayonet, climb to the roof and wave it high overhead. When it has fluttered for full a minute, I hoist it down, return to that upper abattoir, and pick my way between those rigid corpses that so lately were coursing, vibrating men! Ah, me! What desolate spectacle is this! A humped-up form deploys across the stair-top, his head cast over on his breast, his two hands together in the attitude of prayer. I knock against the supplicant, so something drops and rolls, rattling from step to step the full flight down, and landing with a circular spin beside the body of the officer. I stoop and pick this up—a miniature! Bloody, soot-begrimed—I wipe over the face with my thumb and bring to light an image framed in curls twisting with blond delicacy about the exquisite forehead. A gentle oval-faced child with the Dresden-blue eyes of a Teuton.

By eleven o'clock the village of La Targette is ours!

The cannonading leaves off—is directed toward La Folie. The *boches*, however, return our earlier salutation from further off with redoubled vigour ere long, splitting the air with screech-shells.

I turn into the street, the bayonet and lower half of my rifle dripping red gore, and face "La-Terreur" with the visage of an Indian! The entire front of him is streaked with paint—no, blood! his hair matted to his forehead, his eyes blazing like a fiend.

"*En nom Dé*, what a countenance you wear!" I cry, astonished.

"Ah—ah, that is good! You should see yourself," he rejoins.

Am I, indeed, such a monster? Mercy-God, pray for us!

The *sous-lieutenant* and many members of our company are crouching alongside a wall. We turn the corner of the house to rejoin them when a giant shell explodes, hurling us flat on our faces with the force of an avalanche. The whole company goes down. I am stunned for some minutes with showers of glass raining around and a swarm of rifle-bullets swimming over. We cannot discover from whence these are issuing. The *sous-lieutenant* clammers to his feet.

"Come, boys," he says, "the day is not yet finished. We have our first objective, but let us go ahead."

Every one is in that exalted state of mind—or depth of blood-lust—they would go to the ends of earth with less provocation!

We cross the garden on a lope, leap into a communication trench marked with German script on a small board; "SUEZ CANAL," and start a violent rifle fire toward our enemies, who are returning the compliment with machine-gun batteries advantageously placed. Our mortality is high. This duel keeps up for a half hour.

"Take shelter, one by one, behind that *meule de paille*.\* Easy now." These orders from the *sous-lieutenant*.

The "*meule*" is twenty metres ahead. We leave the trench singly, crouching low to advance to the safety offered. The German machines are directed right into the heap, but the bullets do not pass through. They sing continuously like a bee-hive. The duel keeps up at this vantage.

"Let them have it," instructs our one officer.

We are in a peculiar position now. We cannot advance directly—we cannot retreat. On one side is a narrow country road dividing our position from an orchard ruddy with bloom. The trees are not all intact. Bullets and spraying shrapnel have made a havoc here. The boughs droop in

\*Straw-heap.

places disconsolately. It affords good shelter, however. We point this out to the lieutenant.

"*Eh bien*, we make for that," he says. "Get ahead, a few of you, on your hands and knees. See if you make it in safety."

With the roar of cannons in our ears, we start across. Wriggling at times on our stomachs like snakes, flattening to avoid a *rafale*, we make the road and dodge behind intervening trees. A perfect crash of bullets greets this escape. We draw on their fire as much as possible to give our comrades a chance to negotiate the pass. It is cleverly done. We have only two men slightly wounded.

Overhead the trees are clustered with sweet-smelling buds. It is May-time—Springtime. Oh, the glory of that landscape and the havoc of it all! On swaying boughs bright song-birds are twittering—giving up their throaty melody between war's cadenza. Caring not a whit for shot or shell, oblivious of lightnings or thunder—man-made!—their mating songs fill, like nectar the throat of an exquisite, the air of Arras.

With every burst of the machine-guns now our number is steadily diminishing. Bodies of comrades, torn and broken, commence to litter the ground. Sights and sounds alike become insupportable.

"Away, ye nestlings!" I shout—around me the sobs and moans of the suffering men. They are struggling up to their feet, numbers of them, clutching at branches and buds in dying agony, straining at roots. "For shame! Strangle your songs!"

I refer to the birds. The men are lying like so much grain done up in sacks in the orchard. Heart-rending, these piercing shrieks of the helpless! The duel goes on. I snipe at an insolent *boche* scanning us openly over the face of the reserve *parapet*, and he goes up with a leap, dropping flat. Half a hundred bullets go smashing into his form before it is prone. We leap from tree to tree, sniping as we go, crossing the orchard. The day has waned to two o'clock and

no mouthful of food has gone between our lips since early dawn. Do we think of that? Our *sous-lieutenant* is down with a bullet in his thigh. No officer left to command? Each man is on his own now.

A heavy barrage comes over from the enemy's side.

Ah-ching—ching—ching—ching—whrroarr!

It strikes two metres over, exploding with the sound of a spinning saucepan, jarring us all and rocking our heads from side to side.

"*Marmites!*" sings out Parisot. He dodges a rain of shrapnel by dashing for cover to another tree. The shrapnel comes over, bursting like rain; the place getting hotter and hotter every minute.

And all the while we are awaiting reinforcements from our own lines that do not arrive. What can be delaying the trench-clearers? The barrage fire! That is it—and we are cut off! Where are my friends? "La-Terreur" is not in sight. Felizé I lost on entering the orchard. Parisot has vanished like a ghost.

The enemy, heavily reinforced, commences a counter-attack. Our situation is therefore critical—worse: desperate! We dig in with our small tools, opening up a hole large enough to protect our heads. Some are digging, some sniping. It is necessary to hold off Fritz. The minutes drone on—hours punctuate with the murderous fire ahead. We can only return at intervals now. The ammunition is giving out. One from another we are borrowing *cartouches*.\* I am down to my last round—six, rolled into the magazine.

What next?

I am wondering.

Six o'clock falls. The daylight is waning. Long shadows lower—the firing leaves off, first incessant action and finally even at intervals. In this lull we are suddenly relieved! The men come dodging over across the road and across the orchard, springing nimbly from tree to tree; and it is a dog-tired, dishevelled, disorganised company they succour. I

\*Cartridges.

leave my station without one bullet either through my *capote* or in my *lance-pierre*!\*

Parisot joins me, limping near the cross-road.

"*Amoché*?" † I question, much concerned.

"*Non*. Panouille there, stepped upon my ankle when it was knee-deep in mud. I got it wrenched." He points to the irrepressible "La-Terreur," who turns up at his side.

"Be glad you do not *bouffer le pisenlit par les racines, mon frangin*!" ‡ retorts the Parisian dryly.

"See *toutbibe*.§ He fixes you up," I advise.

We start over to the village together. Fragments of our regiment—portions reuniting from every company that yet survives—are organising on the cross-road between La Targette and Neuville St. Vaast. It is a costly victory. Everyone looks grave. Who is missing among us? Only Felizé. This will be a blow. I have acquired a deep affection for this boy. We are assigned to different units as a fresh squad of officers comes up to take charge.

"Brave boys!" comments the *commandant*, looking us over. "You did well to hold the enemy in check. The counter-attack was especially heavy."

Where is Felizé?

"You must have some food," continues the *commandant*.

Food? Who has thought of that? And it is now nine at night, and we have not eaten since five.

I am assigned to the 146th Regiment for the present as *soutien de mitrailleur*.¶

"Good-bye, Parisot," I say.

"Look at La Targette!" he returns.

I turn and look. It is in flames!

"So is Neuville St. Vaast," says a familiar voice. Felizé!

"Hello, Felizé!" I shout. "I thought you were *amoché*."

\*Rifle.

†Wounded?

‡Be glad you do not eat the salad by the roots, my brother, meaning a buried man.

§The doctor.

¶Assistant machine-gun operator.

"I wish so. I am tired. A *bachot* \* would feel good; but in this hell-burning land one should be glad that he lives, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Felizé is getting to be philosopher too.

The flames mount and crackle like brittle branches, spreading into the sky and illuminating everything with a sanguine brilliance. No need for rockets; Bengal fire fades before such a spectacle. Ashes float along on the breeze and catch in our clothes. Small sparks wing over. The air is dense and acrid with smoke, tangy in our nostrils and biting our throats. It is on two sides now, coiling, sailing heavenward, the long pierces of fire stabbing in between.

What a sight! What a sight! Is there no shelter here?

Felizé is assigned to the regiment with me, and we are ordered with a machine-gun squad, a half hour later, to the village of Neuville St. Vaast. On nearer approach it is more of a ruin than ever. The *boches* hold part of it yet, deployed and strongly fortified in a cemetery, from whence they are pouring forth an unearthly rifle-fire through the burning night.

We circumnavigate this—reach a whole house, and erect a mitrailleuse inside on the first floor. From this elevation it is easy to draw bead on the cemetery position, and we propel a raking fire toward the innocent head-stones, glaring white in the light.

"*Tiens! Un train de plaisir!*" † shouts Felizé, falling flat on his face in the apartment. We all go down, and a whistling shell bursts in the room overhead, tearing out the heart of the furnishings but injuring us not at all.

Coincidentally with this, however, a *marmite* strikes the street below and before, and the fragments come flying up all around us.

The sergeant of the squad frowns heavily.

"We had best get out," he says, "else the next one gets us sure."

\*Bed.

†"Look-out! A pleasure train!" The nickname for a shell.

We shoulder our guns and make haste to evacuate the premises.

Ah-ching—ching—ching—ching—whrroarr-r!

The second *arrivée* catches the house exactly right, splitting it open in front and hurling pieces of the brick and timbers right and left!

We are, however, twenty metres away. In another instant, a second shell flinging into it, it bursts into flames, adding smoke to the general cataclysm.

We repair to the cross-road to report to the officer-in-charge, who is the *commandant*, and a great-hearted, sympathetic man.

"Lay off," he urges, "the way is thoroughly won. It is one o'clock and you need sleep against to-morrow."

We are without food. We are without water. We know only we are too tired to acquire either.

"*Dieu!* I am tired! *J'en ai mare!*"\* groans Felizé, his voice choking a little from sheer fatigue. "Let us stretch ourselves here."

We do that. Foodless, drinkless, like tired vagabonds—as we are—we lie down on the border of the road to snatch a few hours' rest. The cannonading goes on; the saucepans sing; the flames mount, higher and higher, like Purgatory-tongues into eternity; the moon sheds a pale, disseminating glow over the head-stones in the St. Vaast cemetery, behind which skulks the foe—we sleep the sleep of the exhausted. God watches over His sons!

All at once——

The table is laid for dinner at home and my wife is coming in with the "*gumbo*." It is steaming from the tureen and breathing a rich fragrance of minced vegetables all over the room, where sunlight filters in through the windows. On two sides my girls are running, playing a game about the table. I seat myself; mouth prepared for this fine dish.

"Here, sit down, you small babies," I say playfully to the girls, and my little one climbs up with great laboriousness to her chair, settling herself and almost dragging off the

\*I am sick and tired of it.

table-cloth in the struggle. I have an instant's fear it will up-set—clutch at the table to steady it. It sways—the tureen turns over—my wife springs back—screams:

"*Mon Dieu*, François, you are spilling it!"

The whole thing goes over with a crash!

I leap up dazed! The splinters of a *marmite* are settling around and a thick cloud rising in the air.

Holy Mother! That must have been a smash!

The whole roadway is covered with soldiers lying in the dirt with heads on their knapsacks and still sleeping, only those close up rubbing their eyes and gazing around like me.

"A close call," ejaculates one, "we have the good God to thank for that."

"The good Fritz, say rather!" retorts the other dryly. "We better move."

The picture of my home-life has vanished into the evanescence from which it sprang. I see the dawn is unfolding—a sweet, half-moist breath issuing from her parted lips. The dank *poilus*, heavy with filth and disreputableness from the trenches, blood-stained and weary-eyed, rise to their knees in a vain effort to shake off the lethargy of nature's demands upon their strength. They have been battling for twenty hours, relaxing for three. Is it any wonder the poor emaciated devils relinquish their couches with regret?

Staggering up finally, they look upon the altered surroundings with a lack of understanding. Everything has changed since the previous day. La Targette and Neuville St. Vaast are belching heat and smoke and showing charred skeletons to the awakening day. The heavy artillery on both sides engages with eloquence more terrible by day than night. Roadway, orchard and farm are in a turbulent state. Bodies of *boches* and *poilus* lie intermingled attended with horrible significance. . . . The mounds rise like dung-hills and equally odorous. Disgusting. . . . I must be out of this—either fight or run!

I rouse Felizé.

"Come," I say in a low tone, "it is all very well to stay

with these boys, but I prefer to be with our own regiment. Do you know where they are? Can we find them?"

"We can try," he responds, as I swing off down the road. "Your *as de carreau*." And it shows how absent I am in my thought that I have let the knapsack lie in the road for the first time since Decize.

I raise it from the ground. A bullet has perforated the *gamelle*\* right in the place where my head joins on my torso when I am asleep! *Dieu!* An inch up or down, and I could march with saints! My *capote* is sped through likewise.

We start for La Targette, walking briskly, and into a charred village and one heaped with dead men.

"Carrion!" splutters Felizé. "Let us be through this quickly.

The bodies lie in the open and among tangled ruins—*boches* and *poilus* mixed as before, and in some instances almost embracing. Their rifles are broken off short in many cases, showing battering-ram tactics; in others, large-powered shells have done their work, shattering men and steel with equal candor. The *mélange* is frightful. Shall I ever forget?

What is this?

I turn him with my foot—delicately, and shudder back! It is poor Mueller, the Alsatian, whose "*Hareng-Saur*" in Vlamertinghe nearly jailed us both and won him a sweetheart. Poor chap—lying on one side of the street with his belly ripped open—his entrails in a pool.

Sauce-pans are breaking fearfully near. Rifle-bullets, too, are shaving close. For some reason, in that lane of sorrow, they are inconsequential. One grows like that. We proceed to the end of the village, rather staggered with smoke and coughing raspingly.

"Oosh!" says Felizé, jumping—stroking the back of his head, "*Une balle m'a rasé les tiffes!*" † His hand comes back with blood. It has grooved his neck—the bullet tear-

\*Little tin pan for cooking strapped outside the sack.

†A ball singed my hair.

ing away the outer covering of skin. The wound is very slight, but needs washing.

"You stay here; I am going over to that farm. I know where there is water and I am going to get it," I tell him, intending to bring over a pail and to dress his wound.

The farmyard is not many paces removed from the edge of La Targette. Every farmyard has a well. I round the corner of a burned dwelling and come face to face with a giant *boche* who is advancing the same as I!

Cristi!

My rifle is in position in an instant and I have it levelled at his breast.

"*Kamerad Franzos*," he cries, throwing up his hands, "*nicht caput!*" Which seems to mean: "Do not kill!" I have no intention of so doing, since he is unarmed. I am sick of slaughter anyhow.

"What are you doing here?" I manage.

He conveys that he was hidden in a cellar during the battle.

"Any more of you about?"

A negative shake of the head.

"Very well then. Forward march, and point me out a well."

This he is willing enough to do when he grasps my meaning and a suggestive poke from the rifle. We come upon a crude-fashioned well with a chain and pail to draw up the water. I signal him to lower it and he does so and offers me the brimming bucket.

"Any poison in that?"

For answer he gulps down a quantity. I order him to fill my *bidon*,\* and take a deep draught myself, after which we march to the road again, leading into La Targette. My prisoner is as docile as a lamb, but what in thunder am I going to do with him? I have Felizé on my hands, and this German— An officer of the French artillery comes striding along. Will he please see my capture to the rear? He will. He orders him roundly out of

\*Canteen.

sight, and I return to succour Felizé, but he has vanished!

Where? The fire is waxing hot. *Marmites* are whanging briskly. I come upon a small detachment of troops—not more than a dozen men headed by a sergeant. I wave my hand and advance toward them up the road. A tall form singles from the rest and returns my salutation with glee. “La-Terreur.” The big Parisian is more than ordinarily flushed, and it comes out they have been lushing liquor.

“Whose house did you ransack?”

“Nobody’s,” he replies. “Fritz wished me some of his beer!”

Sure enough, they have been treated from German knapsacks.

“Where is the regiment?”

“Ah, that is it! Where is it? *Diable!* How rotten, walking among dead ones.”

Clung! Whrroarr!

Four of our regiment go down and out right here.

“Dead ones, you say?” commences the sergeant, scrambling up from his hands and knees,—

Whatever was meant to complete his sentence is silenced by the splinter of a *marmite*, striking him in the throat, cutting it from ear to ear.

“Cristi,” sputters “La-Terreur,” rising at the same time and receiving full in the face a red stream from the sergeant’s gaping wound, “let’s get out of this.”

He crawls off into a little gully with me at his heels, spitting and vomiting, and several members of the regiment follow after. Then the German products commence to rain with as little diversity of direction as they have mercy. It becomes a hole of hell. Terror strikes at my throat—that vague fear of apprehension and hysteria; with each crash I become more excited—chaotic—I want to run—I am panting—choking—eyes popping—yes, I want to run—dash out—away—

I turn to look back of me—to leap out into that field—of death, perhaps. . . .

There is a cow grazing gently by the clover, oblivious to

shot or shell. A cow—fearless—cow— The sense of this brings me back again to sanity. I could laugh aloud—the relief— But, ah God, war is terrible!

Ah-ching—ching—ching—whroarr!

I pluck "La-Terreur": "The village is better than this."

"Go along to your village," is his uncompromising answer.

I start out. Hands and knees I cut across the road, running with body and head low wherever possible, and flattening or crawling elsewhere. The balance, seeing me over in safety, do likewise. We foregather in the cellar of a ruined house to talk it over.

"Well, let us go back to Neuville St. Vaast," finally some one suggests.

We decide on this and start forward. There is a *boyau* running parallel to the road and not as exposed. We go some distance through this. It is a quagmire of battered men, limbs and torsos, scrap-heaps of humanity more pathetic than any painting, more foul than any morass. They lie in exaggerated positions, some grinning at us, some pointing; all knotted up into heaps, and, then again, split into fragments.

Death—death—death—death!

"Do you know where the 156th is?" "La-Terreur" asks an officer, passing through from the other direction.

"No. But go forward and remain at Neuville St. Vaast. If I need you I will call you out." He turns deliberately and starts back in advance of us. "See here," he shows us a small street running from the end of the *boyau* to the village itself, "pass this way and take shelter behind that garden wall. You are comparatively safe there. Await my orders."

We duck low, emerging from the communication trench, and skim up the street like robbers. Behind the wall is a patch of garden and sunshine and peace. It is the 10th of May, and a bright, fair nine o'clock. The past twenty-four hours are an eternity of butchery and desolation. Perhaps we can forget it here. But the garden holds the worst

sight of all—a young woman of possibly twenty years, sprawled across the door-sill of a cellar. Her feet are down and her head, twisted to one side, contorted into a shapeless, shameless mass. . . . Her breast . . . clothing ripped and splashed . . . a dull sodden spot on the gleaming white . . .

We set to work with small tools, carving out a grave. It is a rude receptacle . . . wrap her in a blanket— The bullets are whistling like pipes of pan.

What was she doing in that garden? Why alone—deserted, when the civilian populace long were fled? What lust and degradation had she known at the hands of despoilers, this French peasant—war can tell—perhaps; her dumb mouth—never!

We turn to the other side of the wall. The garden holds charm no longer. The street of the village stretches before us, clogged with bodies. Four bleach in the sun—a boy-*boche*, slender and waxen-white, flat on his back, the flies—large horse variety—nibbling his face; a huddled, vicious mass, twisted sideways, helmet askew but still clinging to the matted head; two others side by side, face-down, backs all bloody—*poilus*.

The air is thick then—hazy with smoke. Ashes and soot float over us. The houses are burning across the street, short tongues of flame licking their quivering sides.

We are a hungry lot of bedraggled beggars, the only sign of gratification seeming to come from the totos. Quantities of these filthy little vermin have ensconced all over my body—my legs and back swarming with them. They bite peculiarly and the itch spreads like a disease. There is no interrupting it. Every man has it, just the same as he would have cholera or eczema.

“La-Terreur,” rubbing his back against the wall, frowns, drawing in his belt. “We must have something to eat,” he complains, “soon, otherwise my back and chest will meet. See here, the house behind us is not razed, what do you say we go in and discover something?”

I reply: “In it is!” and we start together. Sure enough

the house is a bureau of supplies—a Teuton provision depot; and included in its forage is all and more than sufficient for our needs. This is the place for souvenirs: rifles—*Mausers* 9mm. pattern—bayonets, equipment of all kinds, boots, helmets, provisions enough for an army! Here are smoked hams, sides of bacon, big German sausages of various calibres, coffee, sugar, biscuits—a *mélange* of excellent products and provender, and we feast our starved eyes on the whole.

"La-la, I told you, Fritz is a good fellow," says "La-Terreur," wagging his head. "Look what he has left us."

We load up our arms to the full and proceed to the street. The whole famished crowd dives in with a whoop, and, regardless of shot and shell, lunches heartily. We open tins with our *rosalies*, slice up sausage and ham.

"Coffee," sniffs our compatriot from the Villette. "What is food without drink? Americain, can you lend a hand for a *quart de jus*?"\*

"Smash up the beans—there are plenty in that house—and I will draw water," I return. We both go back into the depot, he for his beans, I for a utensil to heat the water. A generous casserole answers the latter purpose well. "Cristi! What have we here—cigars?"

Examination proves they are of the best class, and into the street, among the boys I go, each one of whom is soon puffing a German cigar. The lead is whistling tunefully through the garden, yet despite this and our unhealthy find of a few moments previous, I cross the rancid garden in the direction of the water-well. My Parisian has meanwhile smashed up coffee-beans with the butt-end of his *fusil*. He deposits these in a big iron pot and in goes my water from the casserole. Now it is up to some one to locate a stove. "La-Terreur" attends to this.

"La-la, Americain, you are so smart," he chants, taking it from me, starting deliberately across the street to where a house is falling in ruins with the flames still playing about in good earnest. A gray-green form is stretched upon the

\*Cup of coffee.

stoop like a log across andirons. Our Parisian places the pot upon its stomach. The head and feet of the incinerating German are flaring up. Very soon the torso contracts. The coffee boils with a sweet aroma.

"You see, Fritz is good for anything," explains "La-Terreur." "A more useful citizen it would be hard to discover: He provides the coffee and boils the water. It is to the *bon Dieu* we should recommend him—*when we are all through!* Hé—Fritz?"

The beverage tastes like nectar. We drink and smoke and doze into pastures far away from war and all its gruesome horrors. Again I am at home, and again my children and my wife are around me, and again all is peace and love and tranquillity. And again there is a violent explosion, and *cristi!* I am hurled about like dice from a gambler's cup; and what is war if not a dicer's game with the odds all up on death?

The second explosion decides us all in a jiffy. We leap up and take stock of this new impending annihilation. It is about three o'clock and the air is jarred with concussion after concussion of a harsh, ear-splitting order. Torpedoes! Vermouth bottles, as Parisot used to call them in Belgium. Those violent things that burst with more sound than pain.

I appeal to the *caporal*: "Can we get out of this?"

"*Planque ta trogne!*"\* he shouts suddenly, and both "La-Terreur" and myself lower our heads with a jerk. A "Vermouth" passes over and explodes some metres off so viciously that my ears and throat seem to snap. The pain is at both sides of the head, with dull, stabbing throbs that ache until the eyes water. By and by the film lifts and the pain ceases and a kind of daze succeeds.

I say: "Thanks, *cabot.*"

"La-Terreur" sings out: "What is the matter, Fritz? Keep your temper—we don't want it. What's done is done, and the ham can never come back!"

After the order comes in warning us to be ready for any

\*Duck your head.

emergency, half of the boys are sent up to the main road-way, the balance of us to the crossroad. Here is my long-lost Felizé, bandaged about the throat but otherwise in his usual downcast spirits.

"*J'en ai mare!*"\* he says dully. *Poilus* always have to complain, but they go on all the same.

"What became of you yesterday?"

"An officer sent me to the brigade, but when his back was turned I came over here. *Je n'ai rien a bouffer.*"

Here, then, is the reason for all his disheartenment.

"Nothing to eat!"

I dig down into my sack. His eye lightens.

I give him smoked ham and biscuits and a drink from my *bidon*.

"Um, that tastes good," he says of the water, wiping his mouth. The poor fellow—it does my heart good to see him eat. Fasting is poor policy in war. It is always poor policy according to "La-Terreur."

"*Il ne faut pas s'en faire!*" † That is my motto," he says. "You will be killed just the same!"

You—not he, as usual!

The bombardment of the Teuton batteries grows constantly more menacing, and toward five o'clock the great counter-offensive is launched. We are warned of this and posted against a second garden wall, closer to the attackers and in a position to fire against them. Small holes—make-shift *creneaux*—are drilled every little way. Through these we can shoot and enjoy the luxury of an observation at rare intervals.

The enemy is advancing from the cemetery of Neuville St. Vaast in dense formation, perfectly visible, but depending upon the shadowing gloom to blanket his actions.

A shooting tournament begins. It is a pipe to pick them off. Aim anywhere—here, there, in the moving mass—no shot can possibly fare past. What is left from the rifles,

\*I am sick and tired of it.

†Never worry.

the mitrailleuses and 75s mow down; or is it the other way around? Men fly in spasmodic, twitchy fragments in the air. Legs, arms, jolt off and spin up. Mounds commence to rise as a quota bowls over, and then the whole thing is exploded with a shell and ground and churned.

"*Gumbo a la creole!*" mutters "La-Terreur." He is grim this time.

The earth must be a pasture-land of flesh. We can imagine the saturation into the soil—crimson clots that migrate to the roots of plants and feed and nourish. Then—generations after—luscious grapes come up and are pressed and cascade down the throats of people as wine. Wine? Life-blood!

After the first great onrushing wave, further advance is checked. The pot simmers down and our rifles leave off. In thirty minutes, but for those scraps before the cemetery, no soul would believe a battle had been in progress.

We retire to our ditch-in-the-road, settle down in silence, and smoke another German cigar before night. Unattached, as we are, to this regiment with which we have been fighting, it is not necessary to resume a watch. We lounge about and hum a tune and await the counter-attack. Along about ten it is launched—no different from the first, no more productive of aggressive results. We are in the fire for another hour, shooting through the temporary *creneaux* of the garden wall, and solidly protected behind. The bombardment does not reach us—the rifles cannot. When it simmers down we go back to our ditch and to sleep.

In the early morning I awaken Felizé. I say to him: "Now, come what may, we have to find the regiment, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"La-Terreur" is on his feet and in accord with us, and away we go to the main road in search of some clue. A cyclist is churning up the dirt, riding hard toward us. Felizé intercepts him with an enquiry as to the whereabouts of the 156th.

He looks us over, grinning: "*Certainement*. They are a

kilometre back in the '*chemin creux*';\* but you will have to identify yourselves, and that is a sure thing!"

The 156th is encamped in a swamp that was property of the *boches* two days before. It is now the 11th of May. But our boys have splendidly accounted for themselves and with little further casualty. Here I find Parisot as optimistic as ever, albeit he is dirt-encrusted, and the officer commanding us on the previous day's fighting.

"Tell me, Parisot," I ask him, "how long is it you are in this hole?"

"Only since last night. We are herded here like swine and without any food. Brandy is all we have. If you want some, ask *cabot* there."

Felizé suggests we go farther up to look for an asylum since the space is crowded; and away we go up the hill, four of us—to a horrible sight! The men of the 3rd Battalion are lying on their backs, gazing into the air, their rifles still cocked in their hands—wiped out to a man in one line to a length of 150 metres! Farther down are the *boches*, equally mowed, but it is with artillery that they have met their end, churned up, irregular and gaping. The bodies are piled one on another to a depth of several feet; cut into several pieces each as clean as a razor-edge.

Our men of the 3rd must have charged up the hill on the run and been taken on the flank by enemy machine-guns that combed their line with lead. In every instance a small, round, black and bloody hole through the forehead gives evidence of the fiendish aim of the *boches*. It is the neatest job in slaughter I have seen for many a day. Simply a spraying of the death-engines in the most casual manner, and a downright flop of our men. The regiment is, therefore, this much short.

Felizé turns away in horror. "La-Terreur" and I face one another with blanched faces. This spectacle, so far-reaching in its awful immensity—men broken and bled, down with so slight a thing, in many instances, as a rifle-slug, yet eternally done away with, the divine spark extin-

\*Hollow way.

guished—strikes into our very vitals, steeled as we are. We are speechless, but “La-Terreur” marches forward to a *guitoune*. It is German-made, and, consequently, well-built. They are good constructors as they are excellent cattle. As a fighting unit the Teuton forces cannot be improved upon; but individually—hand to hand—well, it does not take my comment to discover the fact that they are second-class with their enemies. They drive together and fall together; build together and destroy after pattern and order.

The *guitoune* is obstructed with the bodies of German dead—the probable inhabitants. They lay one on another, coming up to the attack, it seems, as each in turn dropped down and out. On top of the heap is a bald-headed, helmetless man. His features are Teutonic clearly, heavy neck, clean-shaven jaw. A man of the better class. A man of forty. His belly is ripped open; his fair face uplifted to the sun, tinged with sadness but without pain, his mild eyes glassy and sinking. Death must have been instantaneous, how otherwise that lack of contortion?

Here is a picture of devastation—of war in all its nausea.

Our Parisian clears away the corpses, tossing them aside like sacks of grain, and with no more compunction, muttering “*Sal!*” with each one, and “*Diable!*” after they fall to the side.

“There, my fine fellows,” he says, finally, wiping his bloody hands on the grass like a butcher, “what gives it now?” He goes inside but comes out with a fearfully disappointed face. “*Rien,*” he mutters, chagrined, as if regretting his task. We leave our *sacs* and our *fusils* there, and return to Parisot.

“What do you eat around here?” I ask my *copain*.

“What do you eat? What you find, my noble friend. What is lying on the ground.”

I shudder.

“It is not very pleasant, I admit that. But *‘a la guerre*

*comme a la guerre!*\* Open the *sacs* of a few of our boys and see what there is. Maybe a pretty good ration, if you are lively."

He evidently refers to the vermin which will get into the *azors* of the dead. They commence breeding as soon as death sets in, and spread over the whole carcass, eating up the food.

We are lucky enough to uncover a box of sardines and a pot of jam; also chocolate and a few stale biscuits in this ghoulish work. Not far from the spot is a hogshead with fresh water. We fill our canteens. Returning, Fritz sends over a *marmite*, which effectually silences an already silent man. But it reads us a warning which is not to be disregarded. The bombardment is commencing. The *guitoune* is the best place for us. We crawl around the perished hosts and inside. With shrapnel raining and the fearful death-spectacle outside and before us for company, we dine and wine on sardines and clear, fresh *flotte*. The panorama should be immortalised on some painting. It is a shame with so much woe, that earth must go on indefinitely condemning itself, when a single resolve could absolve the spectre of war forever. Here, the crumpled thousands; there, in that peaceful other dream-world of idealism, sunshine, happiness, sweetness and peace.

I am always thinking these things, and facing the worst side of men continuously at the same instants. What brutes we become!

"*Une seche*," † says Felizé. He lights it and we all smoke—smelling his!

In the afternoon the order comes in to change position. We file through a former German *boyau* clogged with dead, and the stench dreadful, and await further orders for fully two hours. At four o'clock they come in. We move into a half-finished trench and the night drifts down.

Food arrangements are more convenient for the kitchen staff, but not for us, here than in Belgium. Instead of the

\*War is war.

†A cigarette.

cooks coming up to our trench, we are forced to go back some distance to the rolling kitchens. Perhaps two miles back, these kitchens are congregated together—thirteen for the regiment—and the *ravitaillement*, which is the food-squad, goes back and loads up for the balance of the comrades in each company, lugging the pails and rations forward through field-pitfalls, shell-holes and *boyaux*. The *ravitaillement* goes by rotation, one man being chosen daily from each *escouade*, which makes sixteen to a company.

Our company has at this time only a meagre proportion of its fighting strength, depleted as it is through rigour of battle. It is therefore not necessary to send the full quota. The few return at midnight, having had a great to-do getting through, and we eat in the dead of night with the enemy but a short distance away.

We are not allowed to strike a match. All the same a *mitrailleuse* finds us out and murders a fine, young boy. He turns his head in falling; a cigarette glows between his lips.

"*Il grille une seche.\** He deserves it," says the *caporal*. That small point of fire gave a cue to the enemy.

The ground is the chalky North-of-France soil. Very hard to find comfort in rest on such a soil. However, a line of troops—our first-line—stretching before us, we take no watches, but sleep soundly, every *poilu*.

On the 12th of May, with the fair Spring on all sides, we take stock of our surroundings. Our position is very much changed since the preceding night. We are in what is called the "*Ouvrages Blancs*." † Before us lies the "Bois de la Folie"—Hill 140; on our right, now, are La Targette and Neuville St. Vaast, stark, staring, blackened ruins, still rolling smoke; farther back and slightly left is the *Ferme de Berthonval*, a farm of generous proportions and former riches.

Early morning orders effect the completion of our works. The trench is shallow and defies deepening. With small

\*He smokes a cigarette.

†White Works.

tools against the chalk-stones, it is very disheartening, but succumbs to patient effort.

By nine o'clock Parisot ventures forth with me to scout for water.

"The *Ferme de Berthonval*," he whispers, leading the way out of the *boyau*.

We cross a field that is the battle-ground of the Colonials. The Zouave and Moroccan Regiments have been deployed here, and, as in all that grisly campaign, met severe losses. Khaki-clad forms lay strewn about—a death-hush over the whole solemn, sad scene that is unusual at this time of the day.

"Come, let us get out of it," I murmur. A strange fear clutches at my pulse. No *marmites* are coming; not a hint of Fritz. Still—well, the hush sets me tingling. I have that peculiar on-coming hysteria that I have known at various times. Death stalks! That is it—the spectre of fear and of heroism and destruction. It overburdens me, and I run. Parisot mutters as I stumble on him, but sets up a brisk pace thinking the *boches* are coming, and so we get over to the *Ferme*. We have less scruples getting back. Strange. But water is singularly revivifying.

On the 13th the bombardment increases in volume. We will be called on to stand a lot in the next few days. The sergeant informs me of this. It does not add to my overburdened nerves, still—action is better than inaction; anything in preference to this dull hugging a hole, HUGGING A HOLE!

Ah! Great boon! My turn for the *ravitaillement*.

In the night we creep forth—as far back as our old line of trenches, where the kitchens are now stationed. There is not a light in the whole grave scene, and no matches even allowed to be struck. In this gloom, then, we locate our company-kitchen, and meat and vegetables and coffee are dished up to us and poured out in inky darkness. One member of the party hunts up the bread wagon. Ration: one loaf to two men. Another discovers the *pinard*.\*

\*Wine.

Half-a-litre per man. *Gnole* \*—one litre for sixteen *poilus*. And so on. The load increases—becomes staggering! The *supplement* † enters at this point; sardines, chocolate, tobacco; the letters and packages from “home.” In fact, whatever it is that goes up to make the daily *menage* of a company.

With noise and jabber and expostulation, regardless of the German bouquets hurtling ever thicker in our vicinity, the dispensation goes on. The market gives forth its wares—correct proportion to all—and without the gleam of a lantern. Remarkable! How now? A large shell, thundering to pieces, urges us to speed up the *ravitaillement*. Laden like pack-animals we go out, back to the companies lying there entrenched—ravenous.

The weather makes a sharp change the morning of the 14th, and starts a jetty of rain streaming into our earth-works. The chalky soil gives way to a kind of paste. Smeary and sticky this climbs into our *godasses* ‡ and clogs up the breech-blocks of the rifles throughout. What a picnic for Fritz! That is—if Fritz knew of it. But he does not, because his own *Mauser* stock is protected from such conditions. That is where he has it over *Lebel*. A covering of steel protects the *culasse* of the *Mauser* from clogging in just this sort of weather.

By night we are ordered into the first-line works. Now, here, the same methods of watch and waiting are employed as in Ypres. Bengal rockets go up from both sides. Rifle-courtesies are exchanged. No real damage is done. The eerie, shadowy night carries on with mystic sadness and tense, eager inaction. The 15th passes. The 16th passes. To our left is a steady bombardment. Our sector remains quiet.

Our company is depleted of officers, never having been re-supplied after the initial gruelling attack when all fell by the wayside. The remaining sergeant therefore is in command up to this point. By nightfall of the 16th a lieu-

\*Brandy.

†Extra foods.

‡Shoes.

tenant comes over, and it is a poor lot he marshals to the command. Out of 258 men in the original company, 45 are left. What a holocaust!

We are immediately ordered to prepare for arduous work, and what this is comes out at about one in the morning. We are to dig a new trench in the fore of our present line and about twenty-five metres nearer the enemy. Twenty-five metres is a long way *entre les lignes*. This will bring us within talking distance of Fritz and his *Mausers*.

"D—— dirty business!" somebody comments near at hand. "You will have your head taken off!"

It is "La-Terreur," prodding at the wet clay and drawing it out with a soft "sough."

"Miserable poltroon! I wish he goes to blazes!"

"Shut up!" says the lieutenant.

"They shut you up," the Parisian mutters in retort, but not very loud.

"What is the matter?" I ask him.

"Nothing. He stole my *pinard*."

"Who?"

"Felizé."

"I don't believe it!"

"I did not!" says Felizé hotly, under his breath.

"Shut up!" says the *caporal*.

"It leaked out," says Felizé.

"How you know, *pied de choux?*" flashes "La-Terreur."

"None of your business!"

The *caporal's* voice comes in now, stern but cautious: "*Ferme ton egout ou tu va defiler en tole!*"\*

Quiet restores for several moments.

Then a low-spoken epithet from "La-Terreur." Felizé replies to this.

"See here," says the Parisian roughly, "I give you fair warning now: either you give me the wine in your *bidon* or you—you regret it!"

"*Mariolle!*" † spits out Felizé.

\*Shut up or you go to prison.

†Bluffer.

I lean over and touch the *ci-devant* denizen of the Villette on the arm. "Leave him alone, 'La-Terreur.'"

He flashes up at me and is about to talk, when the lieutenant rips out in a tone that will brook no further disobedience: "That will do. Now, get to work."

We go on digging the parallel.

Later on the Parisian hisses in my ear: "I tell you there is not room for him and me in the same company!"

I get Felizé's ear: "He means to make it unpleasant for you."

He replies to that: "Never fear. I will make it unpleasant for him."

The lieutenant asks for volunteers to go forward on a listening expedition. He thinks he can detect something of the enemy's movements because the quiet is growing ominous.

"Well, why don't you go, poltroon!" "La-Terreur" hurls at my *frangin*.

"*Barre toi!*"\*

Felizé pushes him aside with a grunt and offers himself to the lieutenant. Too late. Eight others have volunteered—myself among them, and two of our number have been chosen.

"The rest continue the parallel," orders the lieutenant.

Felizé shrugs and returns to his station by the Parisian. Bad blood has surely sprung up between the two, and about nothing! What evil passions are aroused by war. One has only to see blood to smell it, and smell blood to shed it! That is it—the worst nature is generated in men and catapulted out through the force of battle-lust. I should like to make it up between these two, but that is impossible.

"You better get out of the company," I advise Felizé.

He shrugs again—non-committal.

The lieutenant and his two volunteers start out stealthily into the night. We see them go—forward—*entre les lignes*

\*Out of my way.

—crawling hands and knees, growing more indistinct—swallowed up in the gloom.

We dig the parallel. Minutes pass—ten—twenty—thirty——

Three rifle shots ring out in quick succession! Then a scream—long—drawn out.

We dig the parallel until morning. Daybreak shows us our trench well advanced; and the rain commences to fall in long, dreary spears. We can work no longer. We cannot go back. We cannot stand upright—it is too shallow in the new parallel. We cannot see our lieutenant or the two volunteers. We can do nothing but lie in clay-mud and water, and hear "La-Terreur" and Felizé curse one another under their breath and the *caporal* tell them to "*ferme ta boîte!*"\* and the poilus laugh and laugh and grumble.

Darkness lends its enchantment to our task and the trench is completed. When the day breaks we are through and hungry and the weather is clear. A new lieutenant comes to take command and now we are 43 men. Bombardment advances from the left. Crashes and belches of mud and smoke float over and stick. In every conceivable niche of our clothes and our flesh is some of the caking stuff. We are sand-crabs in appearance—mud-chickens. It is vile!

But—the parallel being finished—at least we can rest. So we think!

Midnight of the 18th. One o'clock.

"Dig a new trench," orders the new lieutenant.

Dig a new trench? Dig—a—new—trench! No—*mille tonnerres!*—this is a joke!

"Come, get started!" orders the new lieutenant. He brooks no nonsense.

Before the one we made the day before *entre les lignes*—with the hell-fire bombardment sending sprays of death and exploding things over, *we dig a new trench!*

One hundred metres away are the *boches*. Soon the rain of lead becomes so insistent, we will be, not 43, but 3 of the company left if we persist. No protection, no dull

\*Close his trap.

night even, as the stars are shining brightly; what, then, will be the result? At this juncture, and simultaneously, as if the same mentation moved us all, we throw aside our picks and refuse to work.

"Ah, *mes enfants*," commences the new lieutenant—a diplomatic fellow, "what shall I expect *pour la France*, cowardice from you? I have been told you are the bravest company in the regiment. Here I am with you a matter of only twenty hours and you fail me—utterly."

He seems really affected. And the *poilus* are like that—speak harshly to them, order them about, they grumble and groan; but appeal to their hearts, rouse sentiment for the *patrie*, you have them like wax.

We go back to work—with a vim, with vigour; you would think we are digging just one great grave for our enemies, and to be completed by morning. The lieutenant is pleased and we are promised all sorts of fine *suplement*. PROMISED! French promises, especially from officers to *poilus*, are not often fulfilled.

A quiet morning is the 19th. With less of the *marmites* and more of the *pinard*, we are extraordinarily happy. Felizé and "La-Terreur" say nothing, but they avoid each other sedulously. The feud keeps up—silently. It is my turn again for *ravitaillement*, and an unlucky journey this proves. My constituents—those others of the carrier-service whose food-time it is—have gone forth without my knowledge, and here I am, pledged to navigate that labyrinth of by-roads, and alone. The night has already fallen.

Very soon the sergeant comes over to me and enquires: "Are you not on the *ravitaillement*?"

I reply: "*Certainement*."

"Well, the boys have gone already."

"*Diable!* Why did you not tell me? This is a pretty fix. How am I to know when you do not tell me?"

And he assumes it is his fault and replies soothingly: "Never mind, *Americain*, the boys are not very far. You can catch up with them in a minute."

I am not so sure, but I start on after them. The night is inky black. Our new position is not over eighty metres removed from the 3rd Battalion, that is, what is left of them! but without communicating trenches it makes a hazardous journey before the rifle-barrels of the foe.

Which way? That is a question. Our parallel is too new for wire-entanglements as yet. Thus I strike out, without a notion of direction, but assuming I am in the right and will come on the kitchens before long. Everything is still. Not a rifle-shot; not a *marmite*. Not a breath of Fritz on the balmy air.

All at once I am grabbed from behind, jerked up and slammed down in a hole!

It is so quick, the breath goes out of me completely. What is the meaning of this? A hand is clapped over my mouth. A cold something wiggles at my temple. I am held by the collar in a vise of iron.

When the breath returns to my body I commence to think. This must be a shell-hole. Who is hiding here? Are they *poilus* or *boches*? I assume there are two or more. No one man would have the courage to capture me so abruptly. Where am I? In exactly what position—before the lines, behind the lines, beside——

A flashing *fusée éclairante*, lighting the heavens, makes it all clear. I am a prisoner of the Germans! I am *entre les lignes*, where I marched forth, blithesome and gay, directly into the arms of the enemy, heading for his lines! It is too astounding! It would be funny—but it is too real.

A faint, rustling whisper gives me the clue—it is a *poste d'ecoute*.\* I have no weapon to defend myself even if I am inclined to fight, which I am not. We are too precariously located. Either side could rake us down with a volley. Of course it is not to be expected that the Germans will rake their own post, still they might be led to fire. I take stock of my surroundings under the glare of another rocket. We are close to the French parallel in a generous shell-hole protected by sandbags, adopted by the Germans as

\*Listening post.

an advanced point of observation. There are many such between the lines along the whole front. Both sides have them, principally for scouting out the reliefs and movements. I have frequently been on listening duty myself, and it is a hazardous occupation. As a usual thing men are selected who have a knowledge of the enemy tongue.

I am therefore not surprised when I am addressed in French *very* cautiously and bidden to lie still. Three captors have me and they rifle my pockets without shame. They take my knife and my pocketbook, my cigarettes and my cigars. These latter, by the way, are some of the left-over Germans, so they come back to their rightful owners. I see there is a squad of men doing here what we did the night before—opening a new parallel, and they dig and curse very quietly not ten metres away. The two armies are closely *vis-a-vis*. I make myself comfortable on a sandbag in the hole.

Time passes. It registers an eternity. How am I to get away? Visions of prison-camps and poor food and bad treatment flit through my head. We hear such exaggerated accounts. First one of my captors, and then a second, steps out of the *poste*, climbing on small steps cut into the wall-face, and crawling quietly to the Teuton trench. One has gone back to report my capture; the other, probably, to warn the parallel-diggers to go about their work more carefully, since our lines are firing rapidly, and I can myself hear the *poilus* talking about this new activity of "Fritz."

This is my chance! The only remaining *boche* is stacked up against the wall-face nearest our lines and with his back to me. He is taking in every word of the *poilus*. His position remains unmoved; his eyes fixed.

"Ah-ha, my fine fellow," I think, "I will keep them fixed for you!"

I leap at his throat, clutching at the Adam's apple, strangling him with as pretty a spring and grip as was ever made, I believe. He gives a gurgling sound; the apple moves up and down a few times spasmodically; he fingers his gun.

*Mille tonnerres!* It discharges!

Now a fine to-do starts along the fronts, rifles blazing, mitrailleuses engaging, rockets flaming in the sky. Both sides are expectant of an attack and we struggle on in the hole. Overhead the bullets spray.

Whissssst!

A Bengal gives me a view of his face, staring, contorted. It is sickening; still I have to get away. If the only way to do it is to choke a man—why choke it is!

"That will do for you," I think, throwing him aside, somewhat nauseated myself. I peer over the edge. Pyrotechnics make the going unsafe. I will wait a while. After a short time the crackling roars subside and I look out again. Silence over "No Man's Land."\*

"Go forth," says a still, small voice within me.

Up the temporary steps, out of the *poste d'ecoute*, off on hands and knees I venture.

Whissssst!

Cristi! The *boches* have me—flat, flat on the belly! Dragging in my breath, like a drowning man a lifeline, and not daring to stir a hair, though twitching all over, I give them an eternity to withdraw. The clover blooms high in its wilderness profuseness here. I sink in and it is a wonder they can see me at all. Hugging the spongy growth, a Bengal blinks and sinks, and—I am still alive!

I venture forth again. Another volley!

"*Fout le camp au diable!*" † I suggest under my breath, crawling along; but the idea insinuates that it may be French bullets I am dodging. How should my company know? Horizon-blue or grey-green, it is all the same from the lines.

Rising, crazed all at once, by the peril I am facing, I start off running to our lines. The harder I run the farther they seem. My feet are leaden—I cannot lift them. I am panting—gasping . . . A whistling lead-slug seems to

\*We call it *entre les lignes*. I have learned "No Man's Land" from a Canadian trooper.

†Go to the devil.

shout in my ear—it deafens me—my eyes become glazed—I hear nothing but thunder—thunder—thunder—ever-increasing thunder pounding . . . I cannot draw breath—my throat contracts—closes—I choke—stumble—fall!

Lying there, everything seems to break in my head . . . hysteria . . . my chest clogs—I cannot breathe—

Ah, God!

After this I grow sane again and I grovel to my hands and knees. Something contacts with my hand in the clover—another hand, a *maccabé's* . . . —oooh!

Again fear clutches me—I quiver and cry, hunched on my knees, finally collapsing and strangling in morbid terror.

Weakened greatly and unable to stand the strain . . . a bright light is coming from nowhere . . . I presume I am dead—passing into another world . . . All is clear and peaceful—the clover velvety, *sough-soughing* under-foot. I am walking in Paradise. A faint melody runs over and over, touching a very harmonic tone in minor that tingles and tingles me. Before is a blue river. It runs up to the edge of palisades. I advance to this palisade; it shows a deep cut—hesitate . . . Shall I step in? If I step . . . what . . .

SANITY! The trenches before me—not five metres distant, and “Thousand-Eyes,” the great French giant, peering through rifle-barrels—

“Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot! France, do not shoot—I belong to the 8th Company!”

Leaping forward, I hurl myself over the *parapet*!

The fall sends the breath out of me.

“*Diable!*”

“*Sacre bleu!*”

“*Qu’est-ce que c’est que ça?*”

Epithets come out of several throats simultaneously. A *poilu* picks up a *seche* I have knocked out of his hand in the scramble. It is unlit—he has been nibbling it.

Slowly the breath seeps back into me, and I am wringing with perspiration.

A low voice says in a tone of authority: "Who is that *poilu*? Where the devil does he come from?"

Gasping, I face the speaker—a sergeant: "Wha—what company is this?" I stammer, the water running down my face and back.

"*Dixieme Compagnie, Troisieme Bataillon*,"\* he responds.

"Tenth Company? I belong to the Eighth."

A lieutenant, hearing the colloquy, carried on in a low tone, advances to the spot. I give him an outline of my experience.

"Well, so long as you are not hurt," he says, giving me a stiff buckler of brandy, "it's all right. My commissary goes down to the kitchens in a short time. You lay low here, and go along with them then and you find your boys."

This is easy enough. We come upon them loaded and almost ready to return.

The *caporal* says: "What makes you so slow, American?"

"Slow—I? *Especie d'andouille*, next time I will not come at all!"

"Why not?"

"Because you are a blamed fool!"

It is, of course, his place, in lieu of the sergeant, to notify the *ravitaillement* of their duties, and he should have seen that we were all together before starting from the parallel.

"Well—well, these Yan-kays make peculiar jokes," he tells another member of the *corvée*.†

We drink a *quart de pinard*‡ before leaving. There is not much shooting. The *boyaux* are choked with water from the previous rains. Observing this, *cabot* orders us to cross the open field. The soil is wet and slippery and sprinkled with shell-holes, any one of which is enough to stagger a man. A warm wind flutters across the plain at intervals bearing a frightful odor—dead human flesh. Since

\*10th Company, 3rd Battalion.

†Squad.

‡Measure of wine.

the battle of May 9th these corpses are rotting on the ground.

"Marching by one" we proceed up to our lines. The scheme is to call out a low word from man to man to keep in file in the dark.

"*Ça suit!*"\*

"*Ça suit?*"

"*Ça suit?*"

I am carrying two uncovered buckets of coffee. Stepping on to a spongy bog, I jolt my neighbour and he slides. He jolts me and I slide. Headlong I go into a deep shell-hole, kissing a *maccabé* at the bottom of it, the two coffee-pails going up and the whole lukewarm mess pouring over us!

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!*"

I crawl from that hole cursing like a pirate and follow the others, who are privately laughing.

But it is no laughing matter. The boys at the front are furious.

"*Parbleu!* Americain, is that what you come over to France for—to spill the coffee? You can stay at home!"

Felizé grumbles: "Pfui! You are a fool!"

"La-Terreur" growls: "It is a good thing it is not the *pinard*, otherwise you need not come back at all. *Panouille!*" †

The whole section is without coffee. But these accidents happen every little while, so, when the kicking is over, all simmers down to its normal state. I am forgiven and the incident forgotten. *Poilus* have strange temperaments and large hearts. "Nothing lasts for ever," is the motto of the war. We expect the first ten years will be the hardest!

On the 20th of May we are relieved by fresh troops and sent back into the third lines, which were our first lines before the attack. Heavy reinforcements come from the depot. Our company ranks are swollen to 180 men (from 42).

Felizé, remembering my words on the night of the 16th,

\*Everybody here?

†Stupid.

when I advised him to get out of the company owing to the antagonism of the Parisian, takes the place of a cyclist attached to a *liaison* of the *bataillon*, who was killed the day previous. Felizé, before the occasion of the great war, was a professional cyclist in the Hippodrome.

"I am sorry to lose you, *frangin*. Perhaps we shall meet later in the war."

He responds to this: "We have been good friends. I am sorry to lose you too."

We go together along the road to Ecoivres. A *taube* is flying in the sky right overhead. Our anti-craft guns are sending up a barrage of fire. We neither of us attach much importance to this, however; and neither, it seems, does she. Parisot joins us farther on the road. Felizé takes him aside to talk. They gesticulate earnestly for a while, when our *frangin* leaves. Parisot comes back to me rather thoughtful.

"He is going on furlough to Epinal," he volunteers.

I say nothing. But I suspect——

"What is the name of Felizé's sister, Parisot?" I ask him suddenly, determined to talk of anything but war.

He is very startled. His eyes grow wide and he looks at me with a sort of suspicion. Perhaps, seeming to know my powers of attraction for women owing to that unfortunate Juliette incident, I can make him jealous, and this will please Felizé. His sister, I remember, is infatuated with this boy.

"What is her name?" I persist.

"You are interested in Felizé's sister—pah! What about the *poule*\* in St. Jean, ay? I did not think you are that kind. *Hé, diable*—we shall see. She will prefer me to you."

"*Peut-être*." †

"*Absolument!* If you think it is otherwise, you dream!"

"Come. Let us not quarrel about it. We used to be good friends, Parisot."

\*Chicken, meaning girl.

† Perhaps.

"*Oui*, Americain, we were," he says, his heart softening.

But the seed is planted. Perhaps it will take root and furnish a fine love-blossom. Meanwhile—Juliette. I am very sorry for her, but what man is not secretly flattered by a girl's attention? What man would not rather perish than forego even the smallest part of it!—"Une poule," indeed! She is far too serious and refined for that.

Wheeeeshh!

A sound like the flutter of gigantic wings comes through the air! Something flashes steelly in the wet ground a few metres removed. We are thrown one against the other by an irresistible force, a sudden pressure! Frightful sensation! What is this? We await the calamity, but it does not come. The airplane, hovering in the sky above, is still soaring, circumnavigating into position with wide spirals, and climbing out of range of the anti-aircrafts.

Luckily the bomb does not explode. Examination proves it is one of the great-size air-torpedoes launched from bomb-chutes by compressed air, and, gathering momentum in the fall, a most deadly and to-be-dreaded artifice of war.

By eleven that night the Germans start a bombardment of our lines. We are ordered into the first-line trenches again at one-thirty. Daybreak finds us in a newly-dug *boyau* with fresh clayey earth piled high on both sides. We are, then, reserve; but it is an uncomfortable position for all that. Shot and shell rain over, but one becomes accustomed to the din—to the infamous cries and sighs and the unsteady flickering of the rockets.

May 22nd ushers in new hell's deviltry.

### *The Battle of the Bois de la Folie*

"*Copain*," says Parisot, as soon as it is light enough to have a look around, "there are no *guitounes* here, and the day promises to be a hot one. What do you say, we dig a shelter? Any hole is better than none and we can expect grave *chahut*."\*

\*Trouble.

"You think? Well, the sun is out already. You may be right; how do we know how long we will have to stay here—broiling like vermin in a sty."

"La-Terreur" offers his advice:

"What's the use . . . in an hour we may have to move. The 160th is going to attack and we are the reserve. You will be killed."

Neither of us pay the slightest attention, but set to work and hollow out a space just large and deep enough to sit in, but well protected. This takes some time as the passage-way is narrow. We are continually called upon to flatten to one side of the *boyau*, while the telephonists from the *genie*\* and other small detachments pass or re-pass, according to their errands.

By ten in the morning of the 22nd the German dogs-of-war let loose their fury. Thunderous reverberations jar the very teeth in our jaws, and shuddering quivers start to play about my spinal column. It is gruesome, waiting there to be annihilated. We seat ourselves in the *cachibi*, knees to chins, and snap our teeth in grim fortitude. I am commencing to be less sure of myself instead of more so. This thud—thud—thud unseats the nervous system. Panic rests too uneasily upon my shoulders. What will be the *finis*? I shall probably be torn to shreds and these hurled on the shaking air like chaff from a flail-rap.

The offensive is originally planned for one o'clock, but in this bombardment climbing the *parapet* is impossible. It would be extermination for the 160th. The shelling increases, coming heavier and more terrible from the German batteries hourly. The roar is awe-inspiring. Seated inside the small *cachibi*, fragments of *marmites* threaten to negate the work of protection we have so laboriously thrown up.

Parisot tries holding his *sac* before the opening and a regular tattoo beats upon his *gamelle*, the little round tin pan strapped on the outside.

"Come, with your *azor*," he urges, and I do likewise.

\*Engineer corps.

We are smoking our cigarettes, expectant of death, and the deafening detonations explode the ground and pick us up and seem to shake us like rats. The landscape is being distorted with each massive burst.

Ah-ching—ching—ching—whrrroar!

A rain of particles, any one of them mortal, hammers on the *gamelles*, playing a lively tune—a sort of melody.

“*Le Danse Macabre!*” my *copain* shouts, hilarious in the face of danger. I am wondering how the boys outside can withstand the terrific fusillade. Suddenly a head is poked in beside our knapsacks, and a voice implores:

“*Frangins*, could you spare a shelter for a poor perishing soul?”

Rock—sway . . . Tremblers chatter our teeth while we are anxious to laugh! The face of “La-Terreur,” looking in at us, blanched and pleading, is *so* wide of eye and *so* grey of lip.

“If you stay outside, we die, I suppose,” I cannot help jibing him.

“*Nom de Dieu*—shelter!” he sobs.

“Your know how we are fixed—scarcely room enough to breathe. Still, put your head in and that will be something.”

“Quite so, brother. Ah, you are indeed good! If I can only protect my *syphon*\* the *abatis*† can suffer. A shot or two there would send me to the hospital, which is to be desired.”

C-thung—whrrroarr! Whrrrorrr!! Whrrroarr—rr!!!

The end of the world can be no worse than this! Detonation follows detonation; smash and roar and thunder and jargon of splintering, slithering, broken brass and bone! How can they withstand it—those outside? How can we? It is more than human fortitude and strength can endure.

“La-Terreur,” now that he is safe in comparison with the preceding moments, regains his levity. He begs me for tobacco so that we can “*griller une seche*” before we die.

\*Slang for head.

†Slang for legs.

"Face Fritz with a 'smoke' in the mouth . . . You remember the captain before we climbed the *parapet* on the 9th? *Donne moi du rifle!*"

He lights up and puffs a few draws in silent enjoyment. The terror outside keeps up without intermission until three. An endless procession of wounded men passes through the *boyau*, for the most part injured on the head, arms or shoulders, and their moaning and squirming in this death-lagoon en route to the *poste de secours* is pitiful. What shattered pilgrims of humanity they must continue through life! It is such sights as these that always drive the horrors of war into my soul. Consciousness becomes blunted with the bombardment—shells screaming, *marmites* jangling—but the eye can always be jarred into sensibility and pathos by suffering in others.

With the fall of the barrage, we venture out to stretch our legs. Chaos sits on every face, along with the terrain. Mute horripilation succeeds the downpour of Teuton lead. We are ordered to move up into the first-line trenches to fill in the gaps against the advance of the Fritzies. It is always disgusting to fill in gaps! But the 75s start it off with a blast of fire as the first of the attackers show their spikes over the ridge. They come up in dense formation—whole legions of them—and we, behind our *mitrailleuses* and *Lebels*, rake them off and churn them about like so much porridge! Not one negotiates the first parallel *parapet*. *Entre les lignes* they cave in and the whole clover field looks like a holocaust blown into fragments by blast-bellows.

A half-hour later all is serene . . . shot and shell cease, faces leave off twitching at the *creneaux*, the counter-offensive is checked and the birds are singing in the "Bois de la Folie."

At four, bombardment recommences, but this time from our side of the fence. It is the 160th preparing the counter-attack and at four-thirty they go over. Marvellous, inspiring sight! We stand awed—ordered to hold the lines. A heavy barrage fire goes up on both sides, flame and smoke adding to the exorbitance of the scene. No heretofore-

chronicled battleground can stand up to this! It increases in volume—like its earlier brother—in order to hold back the reinforcements, until the Heaven spews fire and a spray of death enfolds both sides. The casualties must be enormous!

Overhead is an interesting air-duel in progress. *Reconnaissance* machines are marking for batteries, and disjointed trails of black soot follow the larger sky-planes about. Four enemy scouts are engaging our small pursuits and getting in bursts at various altitudes but not over fifteen hundred metres, I judge. Regardless of our critical positions, Parisot and myself follow these winged warriors through space, taking stock of their evolutions.

An allied flyer gets on the tail of his rival, firing until he downs him with a grenade from above. A black explosion takes place, peculiarly noiseless beneath all the earth din, and the *boche* collapses, tumbling and wallowing through strata after strata of air, to the lines below. We give our attention to the victorious scout. He makes a wide turn out of range, returning to the attack. A *boche* machine is simultaneously "on his tail." The allied flyer—a master of the craft—makes a loop above, negligencing his fire, and getting right in on his rear. From this position the odds are all in his favour.

With a ripping roar a large bomb breaks up the ground *entre les lignes!* The earth and smoke, spouting a hundred feet high like a geyser, cataract over us, covering the whole works with débris. Parisot and myself struggle from under. We have been cast flat by concussion of the thing. The pressure has been terrific, falling from the clouds. Which one of the *boche*-devils did that?

"Aah!"

An exclamation from my *copain* sends my eyes skywards. A big German monoplane falls like a plummet, one wing detached floating below it; but when the weight of *fuselage* drags it to earth, the single wing drops slower and sails above for an instant like a duck's feather in the empyrean.

"Good shooting!" I comment to myself.

The *boches* take wing then and fly. There are only three left to our eight. Our pursuits go after, and a cheer breaks out among us down below. This is the first air-duel we have witnessed. Anti-aircraft guns have been blowing white puff-balls of smoke into the sky all about them, but inaccuracy has robbed them of their game. The noise from these air-guns is enormous, only second to the barking 75s.

Our boys have gained considerable ground. The attacking columns are battling in the first-line German trenches. The day is cloudless. The wind is not very strong. Suddenly we hear shouts and a dense yellow-greenish smoke-cloud rises *entre les lignes*.

Gas!

The attacking *poilus* come stumbling and reeling across that inferno and toward us. All the ground they have gained is lost. Half their number are asphyxiated and prone. We hastily adjust our gas-masks. They are crude things, just large enough to cover the mouth and lower part of the nose, leaving the eyes exposed. We have not taken the gas-business very seriously. But to see it now laying the troops low, where shot and cannon fail, is a more interesting thing.

Back they come with the rolling cloud behind them, fleeing like condemned hosts from the devil's minions! The acrid odour becomes stealthy, then smarting—finally, strangling! Fortunately the wind is very low and our lines out of focus, otherwise mortality must have been high, for numbers of our men have long ere this made tobacco-pouches out of the masks, and still others thrown them away. Now they have just sufficient of the poison in their lungs to drive home the lesson.

"See," says the lieutenant sharply, "the government looks out for her *poilus*, but you—you are so stupid and self-willed you deserve to die—every mother's son of you without masks!"

The attacking troops suffer heavily. Half of the 10th Company, 160th Regiment, are *hors de combat*.

In the evening at eight we are moved again, and this time to a point on the highway leading from Arras to Bethune, where the Teutons bombard with their usual grave consequences. The highway is bordered with tall and spreading trees. These titans of the plant world snip off at the base, and crash and imperil us, and rock to and fro, and splinter to pieces, by the force of the German shell-fire. Each explosion striking right turns them completely over and up by the roots, so the whole thing becomes a holocaust of branches.

Earlier visitors have hollowed dug-outs beneath the roadway. In these we take shelter, and the cannonading continues, with lesser force at dawn, through the whole night.

When the 23rd of May breaks fresh and moist, we are returned to the front lines once more into the identical emplacement. It is Sunday. Few of us remember this, but those few have a softening moment through the splendour of the day. Our batteries take over the racket and start a fearful stream of lead into the German trenches. And this keeps up for a solid hour, from two until three o'clock.

After this it is: "*Suivez-moi!*"\*

Over the *parapet* we go, shoulder-to-shoulder, and *sac au dos*,† into the two lines of trenches before the "*Bois de la Folie*." Hand-to-hand conflict rages here! The French battering-ram goes through; we take a number of prisoners . . . lust rages . . . murder reigns . . . In the midst of the slaughter we come upon a pitiful sight; the heap of slain of the 160th. This is in itself not so shocking, but it is the barbarous method that has been employed. One expects heavy losses when the "shock" troops go forth into conflict, but Huns—yes, indeed, they are rightly named Huns!

"*Bande des vaches!*" shouts Parisot, coming upon this malodorous scene. It is plain our men of the 10th Company, in attacking, penetrated to the *Bois*, when the wave of gas coming over, they were forced to throw aside their

\*Follow me.

†Knapsack on the back.

arms and surrender. Not one in the lot has a *fusil*. Now the Germans, in place of making them prisoners of war, have shot them down like swine in their tracks. What kind of warfare is this? Hun tactics—of the early 5th Century!

"Ooosh! Such miserable business! They get the *rosalie* from me!" My *copain* spits on the ground in disgust. "I cannot stand their brutal methods. To kill prisoners of war—it is monstrous! We will have revenge, never fear, my comrades. Rest easy—the German pigs 'eat the salad by the roots!' We make marmalade of them!"

We can push no further into the enemy's country. Heavy fire is directed over, and the marmalade, unfortunately, is of the bodies of the slain—slaughtered 10th Company—rather than our live foes. Headway is cut off. We remain stubbornly on the gains—Fritz counter-attacking, but without success.

In the solemnity of night, with the shell-fire minimised to an inconsequential ratio, Parisot is wiping the blood off his *rosalie*.\*

"Hum, we have them good, ay, old blood-and-thunder? Fritz is pacific—*il est bouzillé!*† We make fine *crouste*‡ for the totos."

He lights a *seche*.

A soft, low moan comes in from the darkness ahead—swells to a cry, piercing, long . . . The thing resolves itself into a blood-curdling scream for help!

Parisot is over the *parapet* in a jiffy. By the time I am on top, he is *entre les lignes* several paces and crawling steadily forward. I watch him fascinated. What is that strange sound—like a beast lowing?

He comes back, wriggling—drawing himself carefully along on hands and knees, with an object on his back. They approach the *parapet*—linger there a moment. The *amoché*§

\*Bayonet.

†He is killed.

‡Food.

§Wounded man.

gives his peculiar moan—that chilling, glizading cry ending in a shriek, and a mitrailleuse barks sharply from the enemy's line and starts a rattling cascade of lead spraying over the front. Parisot drops flat. The *amoché* rolls off, crying all the time, and lies like a sack of flour.

When the fire quiets down, we help to pull him over.

*It is a boche!!*

Cristi! Did my *copain* know? Has he deliberately exposed himself for a German "*vache*"? This is unbelievable.

"Parisot, the man is a 'Hun'!" I exclaim, as they take him to the *poste de secours*.

*"Il est un homme, et-il est amoché!"* is his rejoinder.

Strange, the emotions that move man. Parisot goes on polishing his *rosalie* and humming a little aria to himself.

May 24th is a day of air-duels. The sky becomes littered with engaging planes and the anti-aircrafts nag at them, but again without casualty. White smoke patches arise from our side, and black from the enemy. These shots going up, must, of course, come down. Hence a literal tattoo of spent lead rains down between the lines. It is not pleasant to be attacked from front or rear, but above!—Holy Mother, that is terrible!

The sun is burning hot. We are perishing from thirst. There is not a drop in the canteens. We have had no opportunity to refill.

"We want *flotte*,"\* say the *poilus*. "We want *flotte*."

The lieutenant beseeches them: "Patience, *mes braves*, after the bombardment you get *flotte*. Fritz is speaking too heavily now."

The heavy mortars are engaging and for two hours the ground heaves and jerks. As usual, now, the *reconnaissance* machines are marking for batteries. The *boche* planes have large iron crosses painted on the lower surfaces, and a great part of these are *taubes*—monoplanes. Our pursuits keep nagging about, striving for a burst, but Fritz is a good manœuvrer and such flyers as B—— and I—— are

\*Water.

winning their laurels in the air. We have also a goodly group. Our planes are, on the average, higher in quality and speed than the enemy, and our individual pilots are more daring; still aviation among the Teutons is already at a high point of efficiency, and it is nip-and-tuck with the fighters to keep the upper hand at the game.

"Really, *mon lieutenant*, I cannot stand it any more—*je clabote*," I tell my superior, my mouth puckered and stony-dry from thirst. "Either I go for water or I die."

It is four o'clock in the afternoon and no easing of the battery-fire.

He replies to me: "You are crazy! Still, if you want to get killed it is no concern of mine. I tell you this, American, you will never come back."

"I chance that. Anyhow, what is the difference; to get killed by bullet or by thirst?"

He shrugs and I am about to leave.

"Wait. You cannot go alone. Take three men—one from each section. Bring water for the whole company while you are about it."

I salute, and the word goes out for volunteers.

Parisot and "La-Terreur" immediately step forward. They will accompany me anywhere—and so will I, them. The fourth of the party is a young boy—not over nineteen—of the *Classe 15*. We carry each ten water bottles of one litre each, and a pail which can contain eight or ten.

Our *corvée* \* starts through the *boyau* with the *marmites* ching-chinging lustily on both sides. I lead the party. My idea is to proceed to La Targette, which is the nearest place for water.

"*Marches par un!*" I sing out as we issue from the trenches. It will be easier to safe-guard our lives, "marching by one." The Arras-Bethune Highway stretches before, leading into La Targette the shortest way. But here we hesitate. The village is fired with incendiary shells and what remains is going up in dense black smoke.

"*Diable!* We will never reach that safely!"

\*Squad.

The flames are shooting columnally upward, licking at the sky and giving off a crackling, bursting sound. Small pieces of ash assail our nostrils. Tangy vapour floats over. We watch the spectacle—fascinated. “Back to the *boyau*; we will follow the way to the *Ferme de Berthonval*. There is water there.”

We return to the trench and take our way to the *Ferme*. It is three kilometres off. Winding through, almost nauseated by our thirst, it is with rejoicing we come to the well and take in each about two litres before filling the jugs. Oh, what nectar for the gods! Only a man who has stood for forty-eight hours as we did in that clayey soil, in that battle grim, can appreciate such thirst! The pails filled, we rest ourselves for the strenuous return journey, sitting by the well-side—smoking each a *seche*.

We start again—single file—for the *boyau*, but have not proceeded more than a hundred metres through the trench before a hail commences that puts to shame any previous idea of barrage fire I have entertained! Shrapnel and shell fall with prodigality! Heavy calibre ammunition splits and throws sprays of fragments like orange-blossoms showering a bride, before, behind, to both sides, and beneath us!

“How can we live through this?” Parisot shouts, shuddering. We crouch in the frightful deluge. The poor young boy of the *Classe 15* is striving to hold out, his lips grey and his breath panting like a hunted thing. He looks so pathetic—so pale, emaciated and small, I put him behind me and flatten against the side of the *boyau* to cover him. I hear him sobbing with fear. His throbbing heart is labouring against me. I am in terror myself—bordering on panic, but I will not show it before this boy. It would be awful—it would make poltroons of us both.

“Courage, *mon enfant*!” I bellow at him. It seems to put life in us all. The splinters send eruptions of earth churning in the air, and these clump down with enough pressure to bury us all alive! We can not move ahead. The *marmites* are falling—demolishing everything. To re-

main is a death warrant for each, since there is no *guitoune* to protect us. Parisot starts forward.

"It will not do—you will be killed!" "La-Terreur" plucks him back, retreating, pushing out of the *boyau*.

"*Planquez-vous!*"

We fall to our knees, hiding our heads to protect them. The shock passes over—explodes farther on. We are all ghastly; the perspiration running off in streams. We make five metres again, when it is necessary to flatten against the side of the *boyau* once more to dodge the overwhelming shrapnel.

"La-Terreur" bawls in my ear: "If you bring your bones back it will not be Fritz's fault this time!" He is actually grinning, but the grin is of distress. His breath is labouring also, and a *seche* between his teeth is ridiculously awry.

"Never mind me—look for yourself!"

We come to the end of the *boyau* and out in the open road. Leaping across this, more dead than alive, we wind up in a heap on the farther side. Our poor *copain* from the *Classe 15* sinks down, his jaw hanging and his eyes dazed and hollow. He is an object of the greatest compassion. We older men—I can see us suffer, but these young boys with their puerility so shocked—it is frightfully impressive. The tender blossom shrivelled in its youth!

Parisot discovers a *guitoune* and we drag ourselves into it, pulling the boy after. The first emotion over, we are able to look about and to roll a cigarette and foregather our resources. The *guitoune* is on the road from Mont St. Eloi to the *Ferme de Berthonval*, and to go back to the front it is necessary either to wait until the bombardment stops, in which case our poor boys in the first-line will be choking to death, or to go to the Bois d'Ecoivres, take the *Boyau d'Ecoivres* to our former lines, re-cross the Arras-Bethune Highway, and with La Targette steaming at our right, make short-shrift to the company. This is a long journey, and, with twenty litres of water each, scarce to

be desired; still, there is little choice. We cannot remain where we are. The boys are dying!

Night is coming down. We make the *Boyau d'Evacuation* without incident, and here a sad spectacle meets the eyes: the wounded are being removed to *postes des secours*, and more shattered specimens it would be hard to imagine. Seeing we have water, they each beg us for a trifle in trembling tones:

"*Donne moi de la flotte!*"

"*Flotte!*"

"*La flotte, frangin, pour l'amour de Dieu!*"

Pitiful appealings—these.

A hard problem it is to decide what to do. Have a hard heart and pass them by, or give to the *amoché* at the expense of the first-line boys—our company?

It solves itself with the first few beggars who pass. We satisfy them all. But when the line grows endless and the water low, we face each other, questioning. It does not do to return without water, at the same time the *amoché* . . .

Across the open fields is a short cut to the 156th. It is perilous—it is death-defying; but at least we will avoid the wounded and so preserve our comrades. This decided on, over the *parapet* goes the *corvée*, each member helping the other; and through the clover we trudge. Rifle-balls come singing past. It is close to ten at night before that venturesome journey closes. Then we stand among our *copains*, doling out the precious fluid from the pails like so much wine from Hebe. The single portion is not even half-a-litre in order to make the rounds.

"Well, sir, you see we are back," I tell the lieutenant smilingly. I make a general report.

He retorts: "You have the devil's own luck—it is a charmed life you bear, Americain. That barrage-fire grew so heavy, we were sure you could never make the trip. However, you are back and that is all that counts. Go and rest, the four of you; it is not necessary to stand watch to-night."

Saluting, I make my way to the others. We pass a good night sleeping—with the noise of sixty devils let loose overhead and the smell of burning bodies. The shells, exploding among the *maccabés*, kindle their clothing and flesh, and let off a sickening stench. Until midnight this racket continues, though we are unaware of it. The dawn wakens brilliantly sun-flooded and humming with giant motors overhead. A spectacular air-battle is again waging and wang! snag! the combatants are at it hammer and tongs. Again the ground-guns move into action, and this time with better success. Before long a big German plane comes crumpling down near Carency. It has been penetrated through the tanks from underneath in all probability, and the petrol allowed to contact with the engine-exhaust; because, flashing into flame—followed by a mild explosion—the whole mass smokes in its descent. Death for the pilot must have been instantaneous. And for the observer as well, no doubt.

Duelling continues at a fair height, and the white-buds puff in the sky spraying from the mitrailleuses at the fore ends of the crafts and sprinkling the air about the duellists. They dive at dizzy angles, loop, rise . . . pursue one another and battle around, each looking for an opening. They are making observations as they go also—which is the main business. The dawn being faultlessly clear gives them an edge. By and by our lieutenant comes over with some glasses. He is observing the fight, and, moved by my interest, proffers them. Ah! Now the evolutions are frankly distinct. Mr. Boche is not an experienced flyer. He turns tail and flees. It seems there were only two of them in the beginning. Mr. Poilu is after him. He "rides on his tail"; he sends in good bursts; he is about to down him, when— What is this?—a plane from above?—a German! Spiral-diving right down from a vicious height, I see him before the duellists, and he is letting fly in a complete circle about our own boy.—God, annihilation! How can he avoid it? He cannot!—he can't stop! He runs nose-in to the drum of bullets, wabbles uncertainly,

flops . . . starts to sink, swinging to and fro. Now he turns over—twists sideways—drops!

"B——," says our lieutenant gravely, taking the glasses.

There is a world of meaning in his tone. B—— is the reputed master-duellist of the war. This is his especial "*coup*" and he never fails to score with it. He flies high, and when his compatriots are hard-pressed, simply drops down from above with the audacity of a raptor, spreading a circular hail of lead about their pursuer's plane; which is generally, as in this case, run into; but which might be avoided by diving away in one case out of ten. If the machine-gun fire proves inadequate, the Teuton is always in a position to level out fifty yards above and behind his *poilu* victim and to finish things up with a hand-grenade.

This is hardly pleasant to contemplate; still one must face things as they are rather than as one would wish them.

"*Il ne faut pas s'en faire!*"\* my lieutenant assures me. "We get that fellow yet. There isn't one of them that lasts. N—— will do it or I miss my bet. See!"—pointing upward—"there is revenge now!" A burning column is seething to the ground at our right. "It isn't B—— though. He is on his way to the moon."

Sure enough the unconquerable German is gradually drawing out of sight. With the glasses I catch him winging away to a height. Our own planes keep up a vigil, clearing the sky-lanes for the passage of a bomber. And when this large battleplane has flown into Fritz's territory, the whole empyrean relapses into inaction the same as the lines, and day moves without a solitary tremour.

Toward night, however, another attack is launched by our foes but with no better success than those previously. We do not budge an inch. We remain in our captured trenches, facing the "Bois de la Folie," and Fritz "stubs his toe" and falls back as before. The straw-stacks heaped on all sides of our sector—probably forty of them—take fire from a barrage of incendiary shells, so we are in dan-

\*Don't worry.

ger of being smoked out. This is something new. We have to give the enemy credit. He can invent fresh frightfulness every hour.

We are relieved at two A. M.

Parisot faces me with wide eyes. "*Dieu!* It is unbelievable!" he mutters. "We have been in this hell-hole since the first of May.—Twenty-seven days now, my *frangin!*"

No. Impossible!

Twenty-seven days—without relief—in a first-line trench!

Had any one—anywhere—told me in former days this were endurable, I should have called him a suborner of perjury!

## V

### THE CHAMPAGNE

**W**E exit from the boyau between St. Eloi and Ecoivres at daybreak. But what a ghastly change! In place of the green sward—the magnificent prairie that rolled away scarless on our entrance to the Arras front, is now a vast cemetery of crude crosses—small crosses that touch each other, and are marked hieroglyphically and speak in their silence of patriot-dead that swore and sweated in deeds of valour and died. And the whole thing is on such a large scale that it is difficult to believe I am yet in the land of the living—that I have not foundered in that carnage way back and been sunk down and buried with the rest. I must bear—as the lieutenant said—something of a “charmed life.” It impresses me now, though,—this field of slain—with the immensity of the crime on August 4th.

We proceed slowly to Mont St. Eloi and from there down the hill to Frevin Capelle. We are a bedraggled, weary lot. But dropping into sudden peace from war marks an astonishing change! Cheer is only too ready to gush forth if we but allow her. The hillside on this slope is redolent of everything that destruction is not: sweet waving grasses, undulating meadow dotted with wild blossoms—giving way to ploughed fields farther down. Song-birds nestle in the warm, near-Summer air, serenading dawn and ushering in the sun. Where is war now? Ah, distant—far distant!—millions of miles. . . . No, only three kilometres, but it may as well be thirty, or a hundred, or millions. The cannon’s blare is a faint echo, faintly reverberated and tremulously absent. A hill divides us—St. Eloi. On one face:

horror, despicable slaughter and turmoil—all that in man is beast. On the other: tranquillity—all that in man is God.

We lunch in the open field. It is too sweet to be lightly turned aside. We long for fresh air, scenes and breezes. Our voices go up in various chants, some light with Parisian raillery—like "La-Terreur's." A soldier's life is not so certain in this war that he cannot rejoice when occasion of safety presents. A fine-looking crew we pass over to the village for wine.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" says the village wine-merchant, sizing us up. We are sixty-two men in the company, including the reinforcement—a depreciation that in cattle would be appalling! Our faces are streaked with filth, blood and tofos; our backs swarming with these bugs; our clothing vile. We are odorous—dank. We smell like a herd of swine. We come from open graves and are called men! We have not washed, changed our garments, shaved or brushed in twenty-eight days. We have eaten swill-food; we have rotted with the vermin; we have thirsted for drink, and shrunk from fatigue. We—62 men left out of 225—are soldiers of France and just emanating from the trenches!

We take the auto-busses at eleven o'clock—not the "Madeleine" ones from Belgium, but a new kind—*camions*, they are called. The driver tells us they come from America.

"They are the best I have driven," he says, "and I have taken a try at them all."

We are twenty to twenty-two in a bus. And overhead with a burning sun, and underfoot with a dusty road, the trip is not too pleasant and we are landed not too soon—and it is in a field a few hundred metres before the entrance to Sus St. Leger. Nearby is a house, with a water-well in the garden and a spiked fence going around. This is too much!—with the thirst in our throats again. We leap the spikes—Parisot, the big Parisian and myself, quench our craving at the well.

"La Terreur" says disdainfully, wiping his mouth:

"What a pity we have to waste our thirst on *flotte*. Now *pinard*, on the other hand——"

A quaint old lady appears in the doorway of the cottage.

"Have you any wine for sale?" we call out, approaching her. She waits until we come quite close, then stares wide-eyed and withdraws into the house.

"Now, that is intolerable!" cries Parisot, stamping his foot. "She could at least have given a yea or nay." He follows her into the house, and we file after, into the dwelling, striving to keep from soiling the dainty hangings. Through to the kitchen we go, *kepis* in the hand, where we find the old one setting out various measures of wine. "A litre each, mother."

She draws back as if she had been stung. She measures out the wine silently, with tear-filled eyes. Parisot gaily draws out some coins, offering them to her. She shudders now and bursts into tears. "How is that?" he says,—"*Poignon!*"\*

I look at his horrible appearance and I do not wonder at her repulsion. Deep crimson stains on one side of his face and *capote* label him all too clearly a butcher of men; and a growth of scraggy beard and unkempt, unwashed hair and eyes, streaked with powder-grime, complete a picture of disorder that it would be hard to match.

"Here, give me the money—I give it to her!" I exclaim, snatching it away from him.

He laughs.

"Look there," pointing.

"There" is a small square of looking-glass and when I see into it I am frightened. What terrible grotesque image is this? What monster out of an inferno? I resemble a man sixty years old, with matted, foul hair and black face, lined and hunted. I look distraught . . . my eyes roll, muscles twitch . . . my red beard is grey—grimish grey. I have stinking linen and the insects are as prevalent as among the best-kept ordure heaps. I lay the money on the table, loathing my loathesome self.

\*Money.

"It is not that," sobs the old woman, interpreting my distress. "It is because I have two sons in the Champagne, and how many times did I say, 'Pierre, wash yourself behind the ears!' 'Jean, did you make a change of linen this morning?' And all for what?—now they can be as dirty as they like, and all my teaching goes for nothing!"

"La-Terreur" laughs outright at this, and the whole situation is relieved. She refuses our money, we go filing back to the company and lodge in a barn on one of the neighbouring farms. After a while the packages we so carefully stowed away the first time out of Ecoivres are given back to us. We wash, shave, brush, scour, change garments, and,—without waiting for company rations, repair to an inn and order up a steaming supper. It seems incongruous to be dining politely. Likewise, the night in the straw, terrorless and shell-less, is appalling in its peace.

I buy myself a hair-cut like any exquisite.

The barber says: "Any news, *mon vieux*, from the front?"

I respond to this: "Any news, *mon vieux*, from the rear?"

He strops away and laughs heartily.

"I bet you the Austrians get their tails clipped in Italy," he confides. "It will be a good stroke, and the Americans coming in too."

"What is this?—Italy—America!"

"*Mais, oui*. Did you not know—Italy is at war."

"*Est-ce possible?*" I am dumbfounded. "And America too?"

"Not yet. *Les Etats-Unis* is expected to declare war hourly. The *Lusitania* has been torpedoed, and sunk with twelve hundred. Does it not seem to you she will go in?"

I shrug. I know nothing.

He continues: "I am surprised you have not been informed."

How could he know of the isolation of the trenches—where death is the only vigil we keep and news only the news of a comrade falling?

"Is it indeed so—the *boches* got that fine steamer? Well—I knew the *Lusitania* well. I worked in New York two years."

He treats me to a dose of "Quinine"—"for showing his appreciation to all Americans!"

"There was one from the other side in here yesterday. A fine fellow, but he is not well."

"*Etats-Unis?*"

"*Non*, Canadian—from a sector in Belgium."

"How is it there?"

"Very poorly. The Germans gassed the whole line and gained everything up to Ypres."

"*Quel malheur!* You don't know what a time we had holding that line, and now the English. . . ."

For the rest of the day we bathe—both ourselves and our needy clothing. The arms come in for an overhauling, the sacks; and we pass some time in exercises. It is just as well. Sus St. Leger is but a meagre village in Northern France and without either the amusements or desecrations of an Ypres. The countryside is planted out in cereals, potatoes, vegetables and little woods. Our regiment is put—during the course of the day—on its full war footing, recruits coming in fresh and green from the depot. By the 1st of June we are able to review before General Bablond, commanding the brigade, and to receive from him an appreciation for the gallant action of the 156th at La Targette.

June 7th is a nauseating date. I am bidden to assist with a "*Parade d'Execution.*" This is the carrying out of sentence on three wretches who have betrayed the colours. The charge reads: "*Desertion in the Presence of the Enemy.*" The first of these is a boy of probably twenty years. He gets twenty years at hard labour—one for each he has lived. Standing with his co-traitors in the centre of a hollow square composed of four columns of infantry, he hears the charge read without the movement of a muscle; but when his insignias are ripped off—the buttons torn from his uniform, a faint cry escapes him and his face turns an ashen, putty hue.

"You are not worthy the name soldier—not fit to wear the uniform of the French Army, and in the name of the people of France and of the French Republic, I sentence you to twenty years at hard labour and to military degradation," solemnly intones the officer-in-charge.

The second case is disposed of in like manner,—only the culprit is given fifteen years out of consideration for the fact that he is all of forty. This will make him a feeble old prison wreck at fifty-five. The *gendarmes* take over the disgraced and they are marched to the nearest prison barracks.

The third of the trio remains. He has also been stripped of his buttons and marks of honour. His sentence is the most drastic of all: it is death! My heart leaps into my throat as I behold the unhappy man, his lips moving over and over as if in prayer—he is striving to control himself. He sways feebly. His limbs seem to buckle. As often as he straightens to attention, they sink beneath him, and he is in constant danger of sprawling on the ground. This spectacle is nauseating. It is degrading. The harshest strains on the battlefields are as nothing compared with this one unsavoury execution. The *poilus* are muttering among themselves.

A *gendarme* steps over and he is led to a post in the field. It is very early in the day and dawn has not altogether asserted herself. She comes up now, pink and smiling, and making a mockery of the whole solemn scene. We are three kilometres away from Sus St. Leger, in Ivernay. The prairies are mottled with colour. The condemned takes one look around and the scene seems to invigorate him. He draws deep breaths . . . he faces the sun . . . a *gendarme* exhibits a blindfold and a trace of a smile crosses his lips . . . he shakes his head. Twelve men in the firing-squad are tense; at a sign from the officer, they fire!—Whirroarr! In one flashing blare it is over—the man is dead. Fallen on his face—rigid—inhuman, a traitor has passed.

*Vive la France!*

The officer unpleasantly steps forward, adding the "*coup de grâce*." Military exactitude demands this. He fires his ball just under the ear and at immediate range. We are marched in regular formation past the corpse for no other reason than to impress upon us his fate, and allowed to return to the cantonment.

*Suss!*—It takes a long time to get this bad taste out of the mouth. Would to God I had never witnessed it!

On the 10th of June we look our last upon Sus St. Leger, and in the cloudy but warmish ten A. M., sight Tilloy lez Hermanville. Slowly the rain commences to filter down. Discomfort also barks at the door! The town is full of troopers. Out in the meadow, then, we erect our tents. Over these go green branches from the trees—our own first effort as *camoufleurs*. Overhead is a solitary plane with the enemy's markings. He sails low, with humming decadence like a wasp—and equally insolent! We have no way to pick him off.

Among us things have developed a radical change. Not many of the old-time boys are left—only Parisot, the redoubtable "La-Terreur," thirty others and myself. I survey the newcomers for a sign of friendship. A *caporal*—a good fellow, with evident education and some breeding—looms up the first. We readily strike up acquaintance. He is something like Felizé, who, by the way, has written from Epinal. He has not seen his sister, who is in Chaumont, but she would like to know if "their dear Georges" can furlough home soon. Parisot gives a low laugh.

The *sous-lieutenant*, a new man with big ears, rapidly gives him a decision. "Wait until July," he says, "*mon brave*; you get a good visit home then."

My *copain* swears under his breath: "*Sacre nom d'un chien!*" And he remarks to me later in the day: "That *officier* can hear us breathe, I believe. Some day he will stop a sauce-pan with those big ears!"

He is trying hard to mask his disappointment.

Over in the outskirts of Hermanville is a good view of the "sausages"—captive balloons used for observatory posts

by both sides. They float low and a single artillerist occupies the car. When they are attacked or an explosion seems imminent, the observer drops himself out and floats to the lines with a parachute. There is a telephone leading to the artillerist's battery; then a barrage may be sent over—or crack-shots—destroying a whole position.

On nearer approach—that is, on our evacuation of Tilloy lez Hermanville the evening of June 14th—I observe an interesting fact, a large "sausage" is attached by cable to an armoured motor-car, and floats overhead, moved hither and thither as fire or direction demand, and without delay or descent.

"There is expediency for you," remarks my new friend, the *caporal*, who is interested in, and hopes for an appointment to, the aviation. "One is comparatively safe and he sits up above all the racket. When a *rafale* goes up, the motor-car starts, and my artillery observer is drawn out of range of danger."

Just as the darkness settles the rockets go up—whole rainbows of them, visible easily fifteen kilometres back. We are approaching the front. At one, we are in Ecoivres, camping in the open, and rising to a hungry, bleak, cold dawn. Dampness is over everything—creeping in the bones! Ecoivres shows grim marks of battle ravages. The civilian population has fled. Troops, then, deport in the wreckage. It is a changed town. The only shop is a grocery adjacent to the railroad station, and here we are able to exchange our few pennies for produce.

We start again toward the front. Our old lines are labyrinthian now—*boyaux* chasing in net-work and confusion. One of these leads directly to La Targette. La Targette! Neuville St. Vaast! Only two names for two charred spaces! Not a stick, not a stone remains but is charred—smothered in ruins.

Into such a jargon deploys a tunnel, outgrowth of a *boyau* chiselled under the highway. We follow this. We wait the whole morning in a shell-rocked atmosphere, smelling of incineration. Later we pass through a trench labelled

"*Boyaux des Marmites*," and the sauce-pans rain all right! Clatter and roar! The fatalities are staggering. Fifteen men go out under this inferno. Not an hour is consumed in the passing—and the deaths! Into a former *boche* line furnished with *guitounes* we finally make our way. Yet this is only for the night. Eventually the company is ordered into Neuville to remain in that hell's-den on reserve.

"Americain!"—it is the *sous*-lieutenant with the big ears, to whom we have all taken a dislike. "Take another man with you and find us a shelter for this night; some place—mind you—strong enough to resist the bombardment and roomy enough for the section. A cellar will do—*depechez-vous!*"

I salute and depart with Parisot. We explore the ghastliest ruins. Not that we are hunting for ghosts—or misery, but the whole place is such a disorder. The stench of destruction is frightful. Thousands of valiant men have died and been shattered in that hole. Numbers buried alive, eaten by vermin and incinerated. We stumble over burned things—charred . . . turn up a face here . . . arm there—half-blackened; masculine features distorted; inhuman hatred depicted . . . the license of war—murder—in each posture or position.

We come up to a swaying caravansary. The walls totter. Smell is emanating from it like decay.

Parisot contemplates it: "Should be a good cellar here—no?"

There is. It is large and obstructionless, but dead bodies clutter the upstairs floors. These are sagging. If a sudden explosion occurs nearby, *cristi!*—the whole unwhole-some crew will come cataracting down on a visit!

"Lieutenant," I report, "I have found you the cellar for the family!"

He follows over and soon the entire company is installed, inhaling the odour of *maccabés*.

"Any reason to be so liberal with the smell?" he enquires.

"Noise—not smell—should annoy *him!*" murmurs Parisot *sotte voce*. He refers to the ears. The officer looks at him sharply, but he goes about his business without comment.

We have not long to wait for the odour to change. The straw in the place is well-rotted and swarming with totos. When the Teuton batteries awake and a stream of shells wing over, sure enough the whole up-stairs comes crashing down, mingling us with the dead men and closing in all points of egress from the street! An acrid, acid smell floats through the débris—assails the nostrils. . . .

"Gas!" gasps "La-Terreur,"—"you will be suffocated!"

We struggle with our masks in a concerted movement. Two of the boys are without any defence at all! These go out first. The poison vapour wafts in through the chinks denser than ever. We see these poor boys murmur, then gasp, and finally strangle, gurgling cries for help and succour and being unable to get either. Oh, the Teuton demons! Would they could see this, but they might crow: the blood comes up through their nostrils and ears, they toss about wildly in their agony . . . writhe right and left. . . . I close my faculties to the sight and likewise the sound—as much as possible. Presently they die! It is the most horrible death I have ever pictured. It causes several of the company to vomit—new troops, these are, from the depot.

Parisot tells me afterward: "Never again, *copain*, will I take a German prisoner. *Mon Dieu*—no! Kill them like a dog—*comprenez?* K-i-l-l!"

I cannot say I blame him much. That suffocating sight in the dungeon will be with me many a day. Outside it is sunshiny, but hotter with *marmites*.

"I must have water, Parisot," I say,

"You are crazy!"

The *sous-lieutenant* overhears as usual and addresses himself to me: "*N'allez pas! Vous serez tué!*"\* Severely: "We have enough dead men in the company."

\*"Don't go! You will be killed!"

"He—the American?—never!" shouts a merry voice. It is the lieutenant coming up just then. He remembers my earlier excursions for water. "Go, *certainement!*" he winks at me. And to the other: "He bears a charmed life. Not a pint of devils could get him!"

I would like to believe him!

A new boy from the depot tacks alongside.

"Comrade, I know a well," he says, "if you will follow me. I saw it as we came over in the night."

The bullets whistle with lusty humour. They have a way of singing for the fresh boys. He winces and pales.

"Never fear, my friend," I say, starting forth, and impressing him with the very words Parisot used to me: "It is not the one you hear that hits you. Anyway, whether you die to-day or to-morrow—what is the difference?"

He trembles like a leaf. Don't I know that feeling? Have I not experienced it a hundred times? Fear—FEAR—chilling—riding on the wind—panic—nausea—hysteria—  
F E A R !

The well is in the rear of a ruined house. He staggers along this far. I reach over to haul up the chain, but it is broken in two pieces. Bucket I have, but how to reach it down to the level of the water is the problem. A familiar sauce-pan sound sails overhead—smashes with a roar! My companion takes to his heels without a yea or a nay—he is off! Myself? I go down—in a heap . . . lay there, tremble, stagger up. . . .

The water—probably there is none; the well—it is too deep! I toss in a stone. Splash!—it is deep indeed. I attach my bucket with a length of telephone wire to the mutilated chain,—too short! Patch it out with a rope—still too short! The pail slashes around on the surface.

Ah-ching—whrroar!

I am in despair—*marmites* . . . more bullets— What mad danger! But—also—what mad thirst! I am dry—oh, so dry! Ah, my blue tie!—every *poilu* has a blue neckerchief—I attach this. *Sa*, it sinks, with a deep, mellifluous gurgle, into the well below.

Ping! Whizzzz!—

A sharp sting in my forearm strikes so suddenly, almost I allow the whole precious, straining load to crash—almost . . . but it comes up, and I totter with it to the cellar to my "family." There is my churlish guide mingling with the others.

"*Vraiment*, you must learn better than that," I shout, "my fine fellow! Never desert a comrade in *corvée*."

My skin is just ruffled in the forearm by the bullet which passed through the sleeve of my *capote*.

"Did I not tell you the Americain is charmed?" exclaims the lieutenant, triumphantly. But he does not know how closely I came to disproving his words. One inch higher in the arm would have lost me the member!

We are ordered on the 21st into a trench at a point near the already sensational "*Labyrinth*." It is called the *Rietz*. Cloaked with the scars of a recent attack by the 418th Regiment that was without success, we make it habitable and settle down to routine. Comparative quiet persists.

"La-Terreur" says: "Fritz is up to something. You will be killed!"

"Not I!" I say, and have no sooner spoken than a breaking explosion occurs behind the *parados*! It is that sharp sound that splits the ear-drums and pains the inside of the head by its concussion. Vermouths? Ay, a peculiar kind we are afterward to know quite intimately. Thrown up directly from the first lines to a height of a hundred and fifty metres, their wings or screws cause them to swerve and to follow the trenches in a fiendish and roving career.

"*A droite!*"\* the Watch shouts.

We all dive right, and the slow *crapouillot* † succumbs before the *parapet* to our left with a terrific and shocking explosion.

"*Planquez-vous!*" ‡

\*Go right.

†Engine.

‡Duck.

A whirring song overhead buries in the rear—smashing!

"*A gauche!*" \*

"*A droite!*"

"*Planquez vos carafés!*" †

Followed by excruciating thuds, our heads commence to rock and eyes to blind. Human system cannot stand the shock of these monsters. Something breaks inside. The neck jars. Our poor young recruits are partially dazed. They follow instinctively. After thirty minutes the sky-terror seems to ease.

My *caporal*-friend comes forth with a bucket of wine.

"Ah, *cabot*—*pinard?*"

We crowd around, smacking appreciatively. Wine is the soothing luxury of war. An apportionment of quantity is begun, *cabot* setting the fragrant fluid down.

Crrrackkk—whroarr!

With the force of the percussion he is wrenched from his feet—flung headlong into the bucket!

"*Diable!*"

"*Pied de choux!*"

"*Sacre nom d'un nom!*"

"*Andouille!*"

These and a hundred like epithets are hurled at the unfortunate *cabot* as we scramble to our feet. No matter that a *poilu* has been killed—that he lies tossed over the *parados* with his neck a stump. The *pinard* is spilled! THE PINARD IS SPILLED! We old-company men are disgusted to the point of violence.

"*Caporal!*" hisses "*La-Terreur*" in his ear fiercely, "for two *sous* I would kill you for that! Where is the sense in robbing us of our wine? Traitor! *Poltron!*"

By midnight a second bucket is sent over.

With the coming of day is a hush and a breath of Summer. Only one *crapouillot* explodes during the morning. Parisot and myself are sitting in the door of our *cachibi*

\*Go left.

†Duck your heads.

smoking cigarettes when a telephonist of the 160th ventures along.

He stops in and says: "Was it here a torpedo exploded this morning?"

Parisot replies: "No. Farther up to the left."

He passes on to inspect.

I ask my *copain*.

"You are going to Epinal next week?"

He smiles a slow smile.

"Oui."

Roxane Felizé has written him.

He holds his *seche* and contemplates the ash a moment thoughtfully—but smiling all the while. Finally: "I tell you how it is," he says hesitatingly, "I am well"—rising—"I am really anxious to go, I . . ."

The telephonist comes back

"I cannot see anything."

"Then come with me; I show you," offers my *copain*.

They go off together, Parisot in the lead. He is an excellent fellow after all. I wish him luck! That he should win the sister of Felizé is luck enough, still—

I hear his voice: "It is here——"

Whrrroa——

The whole world comes up in a heap and goes down in the void!

Rushing waters beat about in my head, roaring—aching—crowding—ah! With a shuddering sigh I wake—buried in the *abri*! There is no air and I am suffocating! Frantic I grip earth and stone with my fingers—tear—strive to extricate myself. The dark is maddening. . . . I try to remember where I am. Something keeps saying over and over:

"Get out, François—get out, get out,—or you will suffocate!"

*Mon Dieu*—suffocate!

I must overcome my panic. The air grows less and less . . . scarce . . . scarcer—I can hardly breathe. I strangle . . . see before me writhing figures with blood pouring out

of their ears and noses like fountains. God!—help! Help! Will no-one—will no-one—I die—die—help me. . . .

I am dragged then from the earth-heap before the *guitoune*. *Poilus* are frantically shovelling, firing from the *creneaux*—swearing.

I gasp.

“W—what i-is it, Parisot?” I finally manage to articulate toward a back that resembles his. The *poilu* faces me frowning. It is not Parisot.

“Where is Parisot?” I ask. Sudden fear clutches my heart.

“*Mille tonnerres!*—how should I know? The whole *parapet* went up. Go over there—maybe you see.”

I go to the left, sickish to the core.

Cries for help are coming in. It is the telephonist, who comes limping toward me.

“Why do you cry? Go back to the *poste de secours*, they care for you there,” I instruct him. His head is dripping blood.

Where is Parisot? *Where is Parisot?*

My foreboding becomes a mania. I must find this boy. I love him—is he hurt? Is he—is he——

“*Parisot!*”

The cry I give forth is like a wounded animal—stricken to the core. My *copain* lies drenching in his own blood and fragments, the upper part of his head completely blown away—the lower half alone remaining. Oh, misery! His stomach is split wide. His arms are shattered stumps. His legs . . .

*Grâce de Dieu*, what words can uncover the horror of that moment?—my young *frangin*, Parisot the blithe—Parisot the optimistic—not yet twenty-four in age and virile in manhood and strength—wrenched to the War-God—made fodder for the crows.

I wrap him reverently in his tent-cloth. Later on I will bury him.

“H—elp!”

The strangled cry ends in a gurgle. Investigating this,

and marvelling at my own, and usual, escape, I come on a soldier in a hole wedged under the remnants of a *guitoune*. We dig him up—much as I was dug, much as we dig two others—with this exception: he is crushed at the waist and his feet are two sodden masses. They have to amputate them.

My own *cachibi* is as badly wrecked as his. I bunk in with a sergeant. Parisot's death affects me strangely. When night falls I carry him back to the spot where he fell; wrapped in his tent-cloth, lower him in the shallow pit, ornamented with a *Croix de Bois*\* inscribed simply:

GEORGES PARISOT

8th Company, 156th Infantry, A.R.F.

Mort au Champ d'Honneur  
24th Juin, 1915

\* \* \*

I try to sleep. . . .

The relief is sent in two days later. It is not a moment too soon—for me. The gas-poisoning I have undergone, though far from fatal, has rendered me sick as any dog. Those of our boys left to feel anything are as ill as I. But our numbers have shrunken! What with sauce-pans, torpedoes, *rafales* from the mitrailleuses and gas, slaughter has marked us with a heavy hand.

*"C'est le régiment il ne faut pas chercher à comprendre!"*

This is the motto of the French Army. It means: "Never try to understand anything in the regiment!" If you are transferred West or East or South or North, or sent back or sent forward or moved in haste or moved leisurely, or held over or re-transshipped—he not dismayed, be not inquisitive; wonder at *nothing*—this is the habit of war!

\*Wooden cross.

To be secretive, to be without "*raison d'être*," to be openly obtuse.

We are no sooner motored to Beaufort and comfortably ensconced there, then out again it is, and over to Haute Visée.

"*Tiens*," beckons "La-Terreur," on a morning after this, "I have an excellent idea. To-morrow is the 'Fall of the Bastille.' Let us buy *frichti* \* in large quantities and a barrel of beer, and celebrate. What do you say?"

Of course we all agree. Five of us together purchase a barrel of beer—50 litres—on the eve of the national holiday and lay it aside to enjoy on the following morning. Blithe faces are among the company. Light hearts are hammering. We promise ourselves, Lord knows! what heavenly treat on the morrow. About midnight I am hustled out of bed. . . .

"*Hé, Americain, hé, he!*"

"Who is coming? W-what?" I leap to my feet, reaching for the *lance pierre*.†

"Nobody. Don't speak so loud.

"Well, then, what is the matter? Do you get me out of my *bachot* ‡ for nothing? Fine business I call it—waking a man from a sound sleep. *Barre toi!* § I am going back to bed. Poltroon!"

"*Hé—hé!* Just a moment!"

"Not an instant! *Barre toi de la!*"

I shove him aside and roll myself again in the straw. There is a confusion of loud voices, and one, familiar, that says: "Well, let him sleep. It is all the same to us. We have that much more."

Silence.

That much what?

It dawns on me—they are going to drink the fifty litres before morning!

\*Food.

†Rifle.

‡Bed.

§Out of my way.

"*Hé!* What are you doing? Robbers! Thieves!"

My cries wake the whole company. The lieutenant comes down to investigate. He is quartered up-stairs.

"What is the matter here?"

"The robbers are stealing my beer!" I shout.

"Go to sleep—you are dreaming!"

"Dreaming? Noth——"

A sharp kick catches me in the shin. I gurgles and stop.

"*Panouille!*" hisses "*La-Terreur,*"—"do you want to give it all away? Say another word and you die!" He has his bayonet at my breast. Fancy coloured lights are shooting through my head.

"Well, and then?"

"Then *we* drink the beer! See here, the regiment is ordered to move to-morrow; do you want to leave it behind?"

"God forbid!"

"Then don't make such a commotion, and come outside to the right."

I follow out, and my three *copains* are there. The *caporal* has a *quart* \* to his lips and his head tipped back.

"Good cheer!" he says, on recovering. "What was all the racket about?"

"*Panouille* here had a dream. He thought he was drowning!"

"In beer?"

"In water," says my guide scornfully. "Beer drowns the sorrow, never the marrow, my friend!"

"Right!" says a voice at our rear.

*It is the lieutenant!*

We come to strict attention, all of us apprehensive. Will he forbid us the beer? Order us to quarters?

"*Mon lieutenant,*" I address him boldly, "we have the order to leave Haute Visée?"

"At five A. M."

"That is bad news."

\*Tin cup measuring  $\frac{1}{4}$  litre.

"Terrible!"

"What shall we do—we cannot leave this beer?"

"Non."

"But the regiment must move on."

"Oui."

"Then it becomes a necessity to drink the beer, my lieutenant!"

"So it would seem!"

This good-fortune is hailed with delight by my *copains*. I draw a foaming draught for our beloved officer.

"*Pour l'Amérique!*" \* he says, smiling, and tosses it off with a single *sough*. A cheer greets this performance.

"Ssh!" he says,—"*Grandes-Oreilles* is up-stairs!" He refers to the *sous-lieutenant*, who, with his big ears, hears everything, and is equally disliked by inferiors and superior. To waken him would be sacrilege. We quiet as still as mice and with our streaming pails usher in the morning. All the healths are drunk from "Papa" Joffre to *cabot*; and a double-dose to America for good measure!

After this the motors start for Condé Folies and we arrive there at ten in the morning. It is cloudy weather with after a while a generous downpour and we all become uncomfortably soaked in the great field before the town.

"Let us join a *corvée* and get out of this wet," suggests "La-Terreur." A *corvée* is leaving for the town. Mingling with this we pass on, and once inside the village, drop out and glide into a *bistro*.† There is a lusty yelling in the back and the crowing of an infant.

"*Chut*—silence! Raphael, let the infant sleep!"

A small woman issues out and engages the man in charge in rapid conversation. He serves us wine, listening all the time. By and by she goes into the street. He tips a wink.

"Here, gentlemen, I show you a fine sight."

He leads us back into the chamber adjoining where the infant is nestling in a trundle, eyes closed, and in the very

\*For America.

†Drinking-house.

earliest stages of human parturition. A small boy is playing on the floor. He has a tin army "Made in Germany," and the small Uhlans, Dragoons, and Hussars manœuvre about the floor, earnest and warlike.

"Ah-ha-ha!" laughs my Parisian friend. "You commence early. Well, do you think that Fritz is such a bad fellow? I tell you—no! He gives us good cigars."

The little boy looks at us with wide eyes.

"How is that?" asks our publican.

I hasten to explain.

"Fritz stocks up good. Then we drive him back and the whole shooting-match falls to us!"

A high voice says: "The Germans are falling back?"

It is the little woman, returning from the street. We take off our *kepis*.

"Along the 'Bois de la Folie,' yes, madame."

She shudders slightly. We look at the baby and hesitate.

"That is a fine child. He will make a great soldier some day," I say politely. She shudders again.

The publican leads us outside. He says chidingly,

"That was a bad break you made, *m'sieu*. He is not a Frenchman's son at all—he is Teuton."

"Who—the big boy?"

"No. He is French all right; he is mine. The small one. He is two weeks old, lately down from Belgium. My cousin had a hard time there. She—well—she has occasion to remember the Germans. She . . ."

"You do not mean . . ."

"I do! Have another drink. You see, *m'sieu's*, how necessary it is to drive Fritz back. Otherwise the population of France becomes—*tout un fourbi*."\*

"Miserable poltroons!"

He shrugs his shoulders: "Now go out and fight some more."

Cursing and blaspheming, we leave the shop.

"*Mille tonnerres!* That is enough to poison a saint!

\*All a mixture.

And she is a sweet one too—*petite . . . epatante.\* . .*”  
“La-Terreur” runs along in this manner.

Toward nightfall the company is ordered to entrain. We proceed to the station, pack in cattle-cars no better than wagons padded with straw, and squirm out of Condé Folies. The sleep is rapidly banished from our eyes. Rocking, banging, shivering like poor ketches in a squall, we pass outside Paris by morning, without an idea of our destination, but hoping to go East. The cars switch from the northern to the eastern line. Now, assuredly, we are going East! At noon Troyes hoves in sight, where we are stopped for half an hour. Troyes is in the Aube. Towns-women and old men bombard us with cigarettes, coffee, wine, sandwiches and flowers, happy to see the *poilus* and defenders of their hearths. Cries and laughter follow, and we are treated with the utmost good-nature.

After this the cattle-cars proceed, passing into Bayon, Department of the Meurthe et Moselle, toward three in the morning of the next day. We are close to the Alsatian Frontier in a neat town of four thousand souls. Most of these are descendants of the old Alsace—the Alsace of the Franco-Prussian War—who have flown before the tyranny of the invader. Factories flourish upon this town-site—industry of all kinds goes along full-tide.

We lodge in a Chicoree *Fabrique*. It is near the railroad depot and several inviting shops where everything is still cheap as it is all over France. Wine is only nine cents a litre, and beer, six. We exercise, train, and take our turns at defensive-parallel building along the River Meurthe. Nancy is not far distant. Nancy—the home of the 20th Army Corps! I obtain a twenty-four hour *permission* and fare over, for no other purpose than to ramble old haunts. “The cleanest and most up-to-date city in Eastern France” bears its reputation unsulliedly. It has its hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants, its straight streets and Meurthe skirting the faubourgs, its important industries and historic background. Nancy used to be the capital

\*Cute.

city of Lorraine when that province wore blue, as Nancy to Metz is but thirty-five kilos—to Strasbourg but one hundred and seventy. It was therefore variously garrisoned, but mainly with the 11th Division, which is the *Division de Fer de Nancy*.

A *taube* races us into "Little Paris"—the favourite pseudonym for this *ville*. It gains, and on my arrival I am informed much damage has been done. What? Where?

"In hospitals, *m'sieu'*. The *boche*-devils have a liking for shelling our Red Cross."

I observe it may be the fortifications they are thirsting after. A deep growl retorts.

"Fortifications? *Chut! M'sieu' le Soldat* is a stranger in these parts?"

I assure him I am not.

"In my time we were one of the best depots about France," I declare with spirit. "That was ten years ago."

"Ten years! Ten months would make a difference! In the last four we are a hospital base. Now, if you ask my opinion I would say: Reprisals! It is the only thing will teach those *boches* a lesson. They know—the same as we, *mon brave*—that they are shelling Red Cross. We haven't a fortification in the whole town. But let us get in a batch of wounded men, Fritz is here with his 'plunk-plunks' and bombs them off the face of the earth!"

"Horrible!"

"*C'est vrai!*"

We hold a performance in a local theatre with *poilu* actors. We shift to Menil Flin to occupy reserve trenches for a while. We pass from there back to Bayon, and evacuate for parts unknown very suddenly on the 27th of August.

I am stepping aboard the train when a hearty cry goes up, echoed and re-echoed throughout the company:

"Papa Niclausse! Papa Niclausse!"

Sure enough, gaunt and sallow-visaged, our captain comes back to us. Wounded on the 9th of May in Arras, his

recovery has been rapid, and he stands now, smiling and beaming on us all through his grey moustache, his eyes crinkling at the corners with pleasure.

"*C'est un homme!*"\* a *poilu* near me exclaims. He is one of the old Eighth.

Together we get into the carriage. The train jolts off to Epinal, Department of the Vosges.

"Grayon," I say suddenly,—“do you remember a young man named Parisot?”

"*Oui.*"

"He died at Rietz."

"*Oui.*"

"He was born here."

The *chemin de fer* takes a sharp turn, going north-west. At dawn we make Vitry-la-Ville in the Marne; by six o'clock Le Fresnoy. We lodge on a farm. By the 29th—in the evening—we are marching toward the front, the rain pelting down.

"Into the forest, men!" orders Papa Niclausse.

We stream over, soaking wet, and build up large pine fires to dry out. Morning shows us "sausages" floating over the Champagne lines. Evening shows us rockets flaring in a misty, uncertain way. We tramp all night. Morning ushers us to another pine forest; and afternoon brings General Balfourier and his staff of the 20th Army Corps, to inspect the regiment.

"*Hola! Le Marchand de Cigares!*" † sings out "La-Terreur." It is a nickname we have given His Excellency, and a thrill goes all through the company. Sure enough he has his pockets full of "smokes" and disburses with a generous manner. General Balfourier is about as open-handed an officer as there is in France.

The last day of August, Papa Niclausse gathers us together for a final march upon the trenches. It is ten o'clock at night. We proceed for an hour with the guiding rockets to the fore, villages in ruined procession to both sides, and

\*"There is a man for you."

†The Cigar Merchant!

clogged with troops and artillery units. Approaching the *Borne Seize*, we enter a *boyau* winding over a hill and drop right into the first line of trenches.

The sector greets us: "Look out for 'You-Yous'!"

"What are 'You-Yous'?"

"Lemons, divided into squares. When they explode, each square is a fragment."

This is not very explicit. We learn later that they are rifle-grenades, shot with a copper stem about twenty-five centimetres long, and whistling through the air with a sound like hallooming.

"*Tiens! There—planquez-vous!*"\*

We wait for the crash which does not come. Not half of them coming over explode.

"Look out for mines also. Fritz blew us ten days back with an awful mess. If you go up a few metres you see the *entonnoir*."†

We settle down to trench routine.

September 1st dawns grave and gloomy and leaden. I make an examination of the *entonnoir* of our mates and find it an enormous conical hole, easily able to contain a one-story house and lacking none of the colour of a holocaust. Had this exploded "short," as is sometimes the case, a splendid *poste d'ecoute* would have been opened. Our reserve lines are the scene of much activity. The *genie* are tunnelling a mine. The exact infraction of this depends on the character of soil. Be it sandy, the excavation is made gradually down from the second or third line, boarded as it goes, and one man advanced at a time to do the digging. This is owing to the narrowness of the aperture—as minute as possible to admit of operations. The digger cannot stand upright. He packs his excavated soil into sand-bags and expels it; and when the mine achieves the enemy's premier position, powder is laid, an electric wire run through, and the whole exploded at a given signal.

\*Duck!

†Funnel of earth left after the charge of a mine explodes.

The soil in the Champagne is the usual chalk. Heavily-reinforced and buttressed *guitounes* shield us in an admirable manner. Some are sufficient for a half-section—*abris collectives*; some smaller—*abris individus*. The *banquette de tir* \* at the bottom of the *tranchée* † is likewise reinforced and of hardened clay, with, before the front lines, an immense amount of barbed-wire protection.

We are one hundred metres from the enemy. The trenches are lined with single wires spanning the *parapet* inside from top to bottom, and fastened with small iron hooks so they will not swerve. These lead to corps headquarters, a separate line connecting divisional commander, brigade, regiment, battalion and company commanders by telephone, and an additional one to the various artillery units. A constant stream of electricians passes through, repairing cuts.

We have a new sort of hand grenade. During the day these come into play. We hold the engine-of-destruction by the handle just below the point of contact of the four square boards hemming it about, pull a short cord and immediately throw point-blank. The explosion follows within five seconds. Hold the missile an instant too long, it splits in the trench and your *copains* are doomed to pay the same penalty as yourself for this laggardliness.

I finger them gingerly.

"Come, Americain," says "La-Terreur," interrupting my meditation, "we have to take the *poste d'ecoute*."

Night-fall brings a waft of clouds as black as ink and surcharged with rain. It sputters and falls the whole night through. The sergeant on patrol duty comes out to us.

"Now, you know," he says, "whatever happens, you cannot desert this post. You have to see it through."

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* If the whole army comes, what then? *Tu es trop malin pour moi!*" ‡ exclaims "La-Terreur" under his breath. "Do you think I would stay?"

\*Firing platform.

†Trench.

‡You are too smart for me!

"The whole army will not come."

"But the whole navy may!"

This exclamation is called forth by the density of the rain just at that moment. It comes down in slithering sheets, whacking at our *kepîs* with a sound like hail. The *poste d'ecoute*, being a trifle lower than any of the land surrounding, is the recipient of gallons of water coasting in from the furrows in the ground in back.

Cristi!—will we have to swim it?

Higher and higher mounts the water. We are measuring the tide with the proportion of time yet remaining before dawn. If day breaks early, we have beaten the raging flood, but if the rain persists, swelling the brooks surrounding and overcasting the dawn, it will be a mean wager to land, unless we challenge court-martial for desertion by quitting before the hour.

My *frangin* is better off than I—he is taller; yet he stoops down and commences to bail for my sake. He keeps at this for some time without comment, scooping it up with his *kepî*, and the water rising all the time coincidentally he throws it out.

Suddenly I hear an indiscreet exclamation. There is a scramble . . . a splash . . . he is lashing out in all directions!

"What is the matter—do you drown?"

"*Diable*—no! It is some animal!"

"What?"

"I am bitten!"

"You dream!"

"*Sacre bleu*, I do not dream! I am bitten I tell you, and my neck is full of blood!"

A shudder passes through me that ends up in a panic at my heart! Bitten—animal? What deadly thing is inhabiting that well with us? God in Heaven! Snakes—lizards—a cobra! I dare say I am hysterical from the night.

"Stoop down and I will bathe it."

I am anxious to occupy my mind in some immediate way

—to avert fear—to allay panic. But my frantic heart beats a regular tattoo. I wash his wound and I bind it there in the hole. The gushing streams give way to a steady drip—drip. The cloud-burst eases off. Before dawn we emerge, clayey, stinking and wet. The water splashes suggestively. We shiver.

In the morning the watch is taken in rotation. I stand at the *creneau*, *lance pierre* in hand. A stealthy burrowing strikes my ear. It gnaws . . . scratches and scrambles. . . . I commence to tremble because it is different from any sound I have yet heard at the front. I look through. The *creneau* is pitch-black! Something is in there—oosh! I prod through with the bayonet and out comes a rat—a greyish, sickish rat as big as a cat, and spitted clean!

Good fathers!

September 3rd floods the terrain with sun and hurtles us into an artillery duel. Bombardment commences with reverberation from the neighbouring hills. Our 75s are speaking with hoarse throats. Several of the company go down. A singing column of rifle-grenades comes over.

"*Debine toi!*"\*

A gentle prod from a bayonet behind. . . .

"What is it?"

"Way for the telephonist!"

A slender youth with a coil of wire shoves through.

You-You—ou—u! Whroarr!

A *queue de rat*,† exploding at his left, hurls him flat on his face! I approach gingerly and turn him over. For a moment there is nothing visible—but he is stone-dead. Then I observe it: one of the little squares has penetrated at his ear, passed into his brain and paralysed that organ for good. Poor son! Well, at least he holds together in death where few do.

The relief comes in at eleven o'clock in the night. We retire to the *Borne Seize*. The Borne is on the road from Vouziers to St. Menehould, and represents a large stone

\*Move.

†Literally, rat-tail; another name for "You-You."

marked "N: 16," which means "16th Kilometre in the Department of the Marne," counting from the Department of the Meuse. Every kilometre has its marking—every Department these separations from its neighbour, proceeding in regular order all over France.

Our highway on one side is the hill, cutting off the actual front of battle and containing on its slope a reserve camp of troops, the headquarters of the brigade, the kitchens and ambulances. Most of the communicating trenches initiate at this point. On the opposite side is a valley—the Ravin de Marsan. Artillery-caissons, mules, lorries and ammunition are stacked here; and a well-spring at the bottom, exhaling cool, fresh water, supplies our whole corps.

We lodge in several of the *guitounes* at the bottom of the hill, the "Villa des Rats," "Villa des Totos," "Villa des Quatre Vents"—which is "Four Winds," because it is so draughty down there—and the "Hôtel Sans Meubles."\* The wind moans through the valley like a crazed thing, rattling the wooden crosses in the military cemetery not many paces distant and churning up a blanket of white dust.

In the evening we start work with the picks and shovels. It is to widen the *Boyau d'Evacuation*, which is the usual ninety centimetres and must be broadened to a possible metre and twenty centimetres. Prelude of future big happenings!

The *caporal* lights a *seche*.

"Bad business to-morrow," he says.

"Attack?"

"*Non*—funerals. A big one caught the '1st,' and has *boussillé*† them all. We have to do the praying to-morrow."

He makes a wry face.

"What sector was it in, *cabot*?"

"Ours. Fritz shot one day late—as usual!"

How quickly these depot boys learn to joke and to mock at death!

\*Without Furnishings.

†Killed.

The funeral schedule is brief. It is not as bad as *cabot* has made it—but it is bad enough. Five are dead. We hear the service read—every man strictly at attention—and without further ceremony lower away to the sod. The corpses are wrapped in tent-cloth—simple scarf for a hero-son—lain side by side in a single excavation. The chaplain blesses their dust; the soil is heaped in. Our colonel, our Papa Niclausse, our *sous-lieutenant*, and various of the staff are present. We cast down our eyes in profound silence, a few words additional are murmured, and a *fusée* whistles suddenly on the right. Nobody takes any especial interest in the *fusée*, but it severs a grave-cross at the stem!

Bombardment commences lustily on the 6th of September. Fritz takes it into his head to annihilate us all with the least delay possible. Our *boyau* has progressed fairly far. We sit in the doorway of the “Villa des Totos,” smoking leisurely and taking in the view. An enemy plane is marking for batteries above. He spots our artillery and a holocaust lets loose. By the time our pursuits are in the air, he is winging away to the rear with his soot-streaks merging, and our boys at the rolling kitchens are *hors de combat*. Not a single battery is touched—the fire went short; but a couple of *guitounes* and fourteen men are laid out.

By noon we are digging as far as the *Borne Seize*, and the *trains de plaisir*\* shriek over and explode below in the Ravin de Marsan.

“La-Terreur” seats himself on the top of the *boyau* for a rest and a *seche*. A steady hum comes up the road from the direction of Vouziers. I take a place beside him.

“What is it—aero?”

“Non. Cycle-rider.”

The hum increases, breaking into the popping explosions of a motorist. The shells are at this time raining frightfully into the valley.

Boom—boom—crrrackk!

Will he get over the road? He comes—he ducks. . . . A

\*Excursion trains—a nickname for shells.

streaking shell clips over his head—dives into the Ravin! He lays low, like a plainsman over his mustang's neck . . . thunders through—and past, and up on the hill-slope toward the headquarters camp!

"*Hola!*"

A cheer breaks out among our men who have been watching this fascinating game with death. We go back to the digging.

Half an hour later the dispatch-rider returns, starting down the hill, across to the highway and swerving up. *Marmites* explode to both sides.

Ah-ching—ching—ching——

"*Planquez-vous! Voilà la fusée!*"\*

Somebody sees the shell-top coming and we all flop to avoid it . . . but a fat "Mulhouse," too awkward and heavy . . . It catches him in the leg, embedding in his tender flesh, sticking out at both ends at once! A spray of blood goes out. . . . He screams, throwing up both hands and spinning around and around. . . .

"*Diable!* Get him to the ambulance," shouts the *caporal*. This is easier said than done. Our cyclist speeds up with the roar of a fiend.

Ah-ching—ching——

This *marmite* flies so close, he swerves to avoid the pieces and leaps the road. His cycle ditches. He goes over the handle-bars . . . thuds headforemost into the dirt! A groan goes up from the company. Shells splitting on all sides of him, he tries to arise—moans and sinks. . . .

"That is bad business. We have to get him in," says the *caporal*, but he does not volunteer to do it.

"*Au secours!*" †

"Le-Terreur" leaps the parapet, crawling toward his man. He packs him silently on his back—but the going is too bad. He lies flat, lets the shells scream over, and drops him off; then wriggles toward our *boyau* and flattens again. Arm's length away, he stretches out—drags the unfortunate cyclist

\*Duck! There comes a shell!

†Help—Help!

by the heels . . . crawls, flattens—drags him again . . . under this slow progress they make the trench, "La-Terreur" rolls in; after him the unconscious rider.

He lies face down. The *caporal* turns him— I am stunned!

The cycle-rider is Felizé—and the shock of the discovery almost throws me off my feet.

"Felizé!" I cry, getting out my *bidon*\* and forcing a little *pinard* † between his lips.

He recovers slowly, having been badly shaken up, and opens his eyes with a shuddering sigh.

"You know me?"

"Americain," he says.

"You had a narrow escape. But for Jandray you might have been killed." Jandray is the tall Parisian.

They face one another silently. The *marmites* are rattling overhead.

Boom—boom—whissst!

Both right hands come out simultaneously and they clasp in friendship. Eye to eye, the *poilus* are reconciled. Felizé is a *caporal* now. He has won his stripes and a "*Croix de Guerre*" for bravery in riding. What has "La-Terreur"? Only the knowledge of having saved a *copain*—and an estranged one, at that!

Such is warfare.

"I will name you to the lieutenant," says the sergeant.

"No need," he retorts.

Lying at the bottom of the *boyau*, wallowed in his own blood, the *Mulhouse* is dead.

"Felizé," I address my friend suddenly, "you know that Parisot was killed in Arras?"

"*Oui, copain*. My sister wrote they received the *license de chien*.‡ She will take vows in October and commence a novitiate."

\*Canteen.

†Wine.

‡Dog-license: the name given by the French soldiers to the tin tag worn about the wrist and throat, numbered and removed at death.

"Ah."

"Yes, and his mother is dead of grief in Epinal."

"What—of grief? Then I am sorry I sent the news."

"Not at all. It was the only thing to do. Besides, all mothers are like that—they die sooner or later of grief."

"It is terrible!"

"Oui."

At day-dawn of the 9th of September we depart from the *Borne Seize*. We are advancing to Somme Bionne. The village is quartered full, so we lodge in a small pine forest. These forests are the sweetest-smelling things in all France. They stream with sunlight and twitter with bird-cadenzas. Our tents are the roosting-places for thousands of visitors, all begging *la croute*.\* Two kilometres off is Valmy—historic Valmy of ninety-two, where France's Sons crushed the Prussians and survived their own early republic under Kellermann. His heart lies buried here. Under the stones of the giant plateau, crested with the statue of a colossus in bronze, lies the organ of a million throbs and that one battle the greatest of them all!

A little tailor is mending the *sous-lieutenant's* coat. He is a *poilu* like us all, but of a calibre equally deft with the needle or the *fusil*.† He hums beneath a tree, with his back against the trunk and his knees propped up, holding the piece of work—taking stitch after stitch in the most cheerful manner.

"*Farceur!*" ‡ shouts a voice, gruff, rasping,—“How long must I wait while you sing in your sleeve?”

He turns about but discovers no one.

"Well, now," he says, "that must be '*Grandes-Oreilles*.'" §

"*Grandes-Oreilles!*"

A bawl of rage goes up, and the little tailor springs to his feet, white of face and trembling all over. The *sous-lieutenant* is one of those few officers that creep into any army

\*Food.

†Rifle.

‡Clown.

§"Big Ears," the nickname of the *sous-lieutenant*.

—arrogant, autocratic, brutal and unloved. Those of the men who are not openly hostile to him, are in fear of their lives. He is ever in the vicinity, yet skulking—seeming, in his cattish, antipathetical way, to inspire fear and invite awe with oily complacency.

He turns up now, glaring at his unlucky victim. His ears stand out straight from his head, immense and red. His mouth is a livid line.

"Vermin! *Ferme ta boîte!*\* And take your greasy hands from off my clothing!"

He snatches the coat away—looks over the tailor's work.

"Abominable! You cannot sew as good as any ordinary shoemaker!"

To have struck the other across the mouth would not have insulted him worse than this utterance. He turns a scarlet red. His mouth puckers and his eye-balls pop. . . . He controls himself with an effort.

"My lieutenant, I am sure you jest! The coat has been done as well as any fashionable tailor."

"You dare to tell me? Who are you?"

"I have been with *Callot Sœurs*," he protests.

"*Callot Sœurs*—pah! *Vos maitresses*, I presume!"

Again the tailor turns a violent red. He tries to speak, sputters, and is still. No man outside of the army would stand for this abuse. We have been moving closer—"La-Terreur," the *caporal* and myself. Now the *sous-lieutenant* observes us.

"Move on! Does this concern you? One has only to talk to gather a crowd."

"*Mon lieutenant*, Catelain's trade is well known," ventures the *caporal*, who evidently knew him before the war.

"I suppose you will be telling me he fits the Premier next," sneers the officer.

"*Non*,—but his wife!"

"*Diable!* Must I take all this from you? *Sacre!* Since when is the word of a *poilu* to be law in the army? *Espece*

\*Close your trap!

*d'abruti!*" and he lets out a volley of oaths that can be heard outside twenty metres.

We withdraw to a discreet distance.

"You know," says Catelain, "there is something strange about that man. I have seen him somewhere else."

"Well, he surely does not remember you with pleasure," "La-Terreur" grins.

"Non—but he will before we are through."

Catelain has fire in his eye.

Our merry lieutenant—he of the "Bois de la Folie" and the beer-keg—advances at this instance.

"You have been cited for the stripes," he says, addressing me.

"What—*moi?*"

"*Oui.*"

"Why?"

"Now, that is unusual. A man usually knows what he is promoted for," he laughs.

"But I have done noth— Give it to the younger boys!" I point to a lad of the *Classe* 15—"he will make a good *caporal*."

"No doubt about it! But you, American?"

"Oh, no—no. The war will soon be over and I go back to America. Some of these young boys have to remain in the army. Give them the stripes."

"Have it your own way," he replies, shrugging. "This is the second time you have refused, is it not?"

"*Oui.* Once at Neuville."

"See. You would be sergeant now."

It is my turn to shrug.

"*Un moment, mon lieutenant,*" intercepts Catelain. He has been very thoughtful. He goes off now side by side with the lieutenant, conversing in a low tone.

We work with the *genie*\* on some dug-outs. Into this we load ammunition for the batteries for the great offensive that is scheduled in the Champagne.

"Aah, Fritz will dance!" says the *genie*.

\*Engineers.

A new steel helmet replaces the soft *kepi* of old in the trenches. It is weighty and adds a material touch of discomfort to the otherwise blameless life in the little pine forest. But we know better, this time, than to throw them away!

"Order in to depart for the front at 23 o'clock!" sings out "La-Terreur," approaching from the captain's tent.

"When?"

"Twenty-three o'clock!"

"You are crazy!"

"I am not. You are stupid!" he retorts. "See my new watch?"

I examine it with interest. It has twenty-four hours marked out—the new army regulations calling for the issuance of orders from one o'clock in the morning straight around to the midnight following without repetition of the count. Thirteen o'clock is therefore 1.00 P. M., 3.20 P. M., twenty minutes past fifteen!

It is the 17th of September. We pack our belongings, rolling and strapping the blanket outside the sac, and part by dead of night from the pregnant pine wood.

Rip—rip—boom—roarr!

Boom—boom!

The cannons commence to belch echoes and the shadows to quake. The company approaches the *Borne Seize* by five in the morning, and remarks a change in the whole surrounding. Nine days have moved troops in from every available source. The Ravin de Marsan is one solid pack—the hill-slope above jammed with them. The interim has seen a *tako* \* constructed alongside the highway and now the ammunition commences to pour in for the batteries. A bombardment of furious intensity starts hurtling from the German lines. The enemy evidently knows we are up to something and is thundering on his own hook. The terrain jars. The whole, humming air is fraught with missiles, and we advance double-quick and teeth on edge to inhabit our trenches.

\*Temporary railroad.

No doubt about it the sector is agitated. The troops going out tell with serious faces of calamities all along the line.

"Mines," is the general warning.

We are hungry and tired.

"Go on the *ravitaillement*,\* Americain."

"Why—I? It is not my turn."

"So I told the lieutenant. He says, 'Never mind. The Americain is the only one can get through in this bombardment!' So it will have to be you!"

"Well, all right. But notify Fritz, so I can keep the regard of the lieutenant. I would not lose my life for anything!"

This sets them all laughing.

I go out bravely, but my heart is not so light.

A barrage of fire comes over on the return trip, and, loaded with food-stuffs, I have to flatten—crouch in a *quitoune* until the worst is over, and struggle past wounded men and under dizzy *marmites*. There are four others with me. We bring back sufficient food for the whole sector, besides *pinard* and *gnole*. Not one is struck. Not one has spilled a drop in the whole adventure.

The lieutenant laughs.

"America is a wonderful country!"

I commence to think I am leading a bomb-proof life.

"Don't be so smart," says "La-Terreur,"—"you will be killed!"

He takes the watch with me at 22.00 o'clock. The night is clear and a soft wind blows over from the southward. Moon-rays rest on the trenches—glitter the landscape. Bombardment ceases. Those that are not on watch, sleep. The occasional burst of a rocket serves to accentuate the silence. Above, sparkling stars are bursting from the heavens, winking rakishly and trembling, it seems, with excitement. There is a sudden hum—a thrum—a motor churning through the air; and agitation in our lines! A light blazes into the sky, blindingly intense! Another!—a

\*Food-carrier service.

third!—fourth! They meet, intersect, part, and comb the empyrean, scouting for the monster.

He eludes them. They swipe back and forth—cutting at random. Still no outline, though the roaring of the exhaust becomes more insistent. They proceed very systematically, then, washing the whole vast expanse with slowness and precision.

All at once he leaps into view . . . as suddenly disappears! Frantic, the lights take up his track again—he lumines, slips off on the wing, hovers in sight. . . . The anti-aircrafts come into action.

Bang—wang—whrroarr!

Directly over our lines, it is possible to see his faint shape racing in the glow of the moon. The searchlights nag him relentlessly. They anticipate him—sense each move before he makes it . . . glare at him—expose him—sneer at him! Our guns thunder up. . . .

A rain of shrapnel plunk-plunks before the *parapet*! Dirt churns up—floats over. Something flashes, contacts my helmet with a chink and jars all through my neck! It ricochets, landing squarely in the mouth of the *creneau*—a slug!

*Our own returning anti-aircraft fire!*

Cristi! How am I going to get out from under the—

The answer comes with a wrench and a crashing explosion! Everything leaps up from underfoot to dash in my face! All becomes oblivion . . . a volcano spouting—spouting—spouting, the lava running down its sides like water, tearing—rushing—beating in my ear-drums, drawing up ever closer—threatening to submerge me! I try to rise to run away—walk away—crawl—strain, pulling with all my heart—all my muscle—breath, energy, agony—desperation—cannot—can't move—can't—

"Turn over! Ah, you are killed!"

I am flopped over on my back and "La-Terreur's" face breathes hot into mine.

"Non! Non!" I struggle, and arise,—“I am not touched!”

“Holy Virgin! Americain, I think you are immune—I was sure you were *bouzille* \* that time!”

“Well, I am not!”

“Have it your own way,” he shrugs.

I feel around ruefully for my rifle. It is jammed, and the trench is in frightful condition. Earth is cluttered everywhere, and a perfect inferno of blazing shells and screaming *marmites* comes over. Our own 75s are engaging. They play four at a time so the din grows enormous!

Tzing—boom—crrashh!

“Ah-ching—ching—ching—” respond the *marmites*.

Fritz is getting in as good as he can counter. Our side plays up the rifles and a nasty shower of bullets whistles out. Overhead the anti-aircrafts are still blazing away—the searchlights combing, the shrapnel tattooing the ground!

We are at the *creneaux* five paces over and I am shooting with a dead man's rifle. It is fire!—load!—“Give it to him good!”—and roll them in again!

As quick as the stream exhausts, screams of the wounded urge it fuller and louder. No one takes any note of the trench or *débris*—nobody tends the wounded. Four metres from where we stood the mine was exploded. It churned up the sector—mashed in the *quitounes*—smashed up the men—splintered the firearms!

Slowly, like thunder regretting its passage, the fire draws off—quiets down. A single shell explodes—then two *marmites*—then a crashing, ear-splitting explosion!

It is Fritz's line this time—not ours. Our *genie* has underground his works, and the whole thing goes up with a jangle of arms and legs and fractured, groaning earth!

Bengal rockets show him in confusion. His line is broken as bad, or worse, than ours. The conflagration starts over again. The injured scream; the *fusées* shrill; the terrain rocks like a gigantic boat upon a gigantic sea. Every one is

\*Killed.

shooting away like mad! No quarter—no time for breath—no bending to the *amoché*.<sup>\*</sup> We load—fire—“give it to him good!”—and roll them in again.

We are sending up a confusion of lights: *fusée blanche* † for the observation; a single big red light for the 75s; after this, green “*pour rallonger le tir*,” which is “ranging the fire”; and then a *gerbe* ‡ for a general barrage. Two seconds after each signal, our batteries respond—a whistling thunder goes over that sends up more men than can be created in God’s own time! and the foe is dwindled, and we are all murderers—but especially the bureaucrats in Berlin!

By dawn we are out of that orgy, resting in the *guitounes*, our places taken by some fresher ranks from the *Borne Seize*. Wounded are passing in morbid procession throughout the *boyaux*. Sobbing, babbling wrecks of men that are a burden to themselves and a reproach to every living God-whole other. By the light of a candle planted in the bayonet-handle of one of my *copains*, we have a chance to pass stories. A survivor of the trench-mine farther down explains his adventure.

“I am in the middle of a pinch of snuff when the d—Fritzies explode us! How is that for brass nerve?—cannot take a sniff but I must be disturbed!”

He is from the South of France, where they snuff tobacco.

“Have a *seche*,” offers “La-Terreur.”

“*Seche*? Pah! who wants to eat smoke? We have the *boches* for that. They send you the smoke all right—hah!”

“They send you—yes! You will be killed!” retorts the Parisian, with his usual mal-prophetic manner.

They go down after the *ravitaillement*. Two hours later the *Gascon* § staggers back. He has a bucket of soup, and his face is begrimed with smoke. He is the only one of the *ravitaillement* to return.

\*Wounded.

†Ordinary colourless rockets.

‡Bouquet.

§Gascony was formerly a province in the Southwest of France.

"They sent you smoke!" says the *caporal* rather lightly.

"The big one too. He is *amoché*, my brothers!"

"What—'La-Terreur'?" I exclaim.

"*Terreur* nothing! He was frightened like the rest of us. He lost his jaw."

"You don't mean it!"

"I do. We were caught in a barrage. Not a mother's son escaped beside myself. I was laying in my snuff at the time. I told you, snuff is the best life-preserver in the world. Learn to use it, my friends, learn to use it!"

"But 'La-Terreur'?" I persist.

"He was standing with the rest by the cook, lighting his plagued *seche*. Along comes a *gros noir*,\* blows up the rolling kitchen, butchers the cook, Baroux, Weill, Meyer and Du Roy, and steals your friend Jandray's jaw. Can I help it? Did I not tell him to snuff? He must smoke! Well, now he can't do it!"

The soup is distributed.

Poor Jandray! Under the circumstances it would certainly have paid him to learn to snuff! Fritz, as he would himself have said, was as unaccommodating as usual—stealing his jaw in place of his nose, and no more will I hear his cheery: "You will be killed!"

*Vraiment, c'est terrible!*

The repairs to our sector commence at night-fall. The *parapet* has been levelled. Under a clear moon with the shot and shell flying gaily, four men go out. One is torn in the side and his lungs and his ribs are exposed. My Heaven, what a spectacle! And what cries! The poor wounded boy at my left has two fingers off, and the blood flows redly.

"Go down," I advise, "to the *poste de secours* right away. And if you see Jandray, convey my earnest congratulations . . . Tell him I am still in a position to get killed. I hope he goes home and learns to use snuffing tobacco!"

The boy goes away, and he is smiling and sobbing together.

Momentarily the shrapnel rains harder.

\*Big Black, name for a heavy shell.

"Tell them, *cabot*, to let it off—or let us off," Catelain pokes at the *caporal*.

"I wish I could. Well, it will have to be *us* off. *Planquez-vous*, my friends!" He exclaims, as the order comes to abandon work.

We lie low for a half-hour. Then, rising to the *parapet*, Fritz bristles up like a shrew with his mitrailleuses! A second time we are forced to duck below. The slugs hum recklessly overhead, plunk-plunking into the *parados*—a veritable sheet of steel! In the midst of this—on our knees, we are forced to repair the wreckage: we pack in sand to the sacks and get ready for daybreak. When the moon sets we finish our labour in the opaque peace before dawn.

It is up to the 160th to prepare the *Parallèle du Départ*.\* Quiet reigning from noon on, by night of the 20th they undertake the work, and myself and Catelain are designated for the *poste d'ecoute*. Monotonously hour for hour in that shell-hole, it is only the intermittent jarring of our picks and a low guttural sound at times from the enemy's line that fractures the silence. It has clouded over and the moon is no longer distinct. On his stomach the sergeant wriggles over at 1:00 A. M., to give us the hour. Coincidentally a *rafale* of shrapnel breaks viciously, coming over beneath a *fusée éclairante* † from Fritz, and the 160th is forced to scatter. Off they go for their lives, diving into the *boyaux* beneath the wire-entanglements.

We hold on 'til dawn, relieve, and take the watch at night. The work on the *parallele* continues. Again relief—bombardment—*ravitaillement*. The 75s are answering shot for shot.

"*Au creneau*,‡ *Americain*, 11:00 to 13:00 o'clock," announces the sergeant.

I go up to the shooting-hole. My predecessor stands in the most rakish attitude against the *parapet* with his feet crossed, holding a half-consumed cigarette in one hand,

\*Trench dug before the first lines for an attack.

†Flare shell.

‡To the shooting-hole—that is, on watch.

*and headless!* No spectre from Hades could have caused my heart to bound more wildly! Such nonchalance—and such horror!—such diablerie!

The din of bombardment is intensified every moment. *Crapouillets*, *marmites*, torpedoes seek out with fiendish accuracy my position—churn up the broken *parapet*, where it is split into a furrow. I am nonplussed that each moment is not my last!

This deluge finally ceases at dark, but the din persists. Now it is all from our side, and the whistling *Jeans* go overhead with abandon.

A misty morning is challenged on the 23rd. The 160th Regiment comes up and relieves for the attack.

"*Mon Dieu!* It is a good thing we can quit the trenches," almost sobs the little *caporal*. "My ears are broken."

I think his nerves are going. We have had so many of these nervewrecks of late—shell-shock, they call it. Nobody is immune. It is the most pathetic disaster of all.

We go out—to the *Borne* 16.

The *Borne* is dug with new stacked *boyaux*, bisecting the *Ravin de Marsan*, which chokes with the vari-calibred monsters-of-war, oscillating and resounding with each discharge. A perfect hell-siege is going on!

Boom—whrroar! Boom—boom—whrroarr! Crrr-ackk—boom! Boom!!

"God preserve us!"

The little *caporal's* lips are moving.

"Come on, *cabot*, this has nothing to do with us," I shout in his ear. We go on to *Wargemoulin*—twisting, winding in the *boyau*. From *Wargemoulin* to *Hans*. A temporary barracks is raised outside the village. We lodge in this, and everything unnecessary for actual attack is taken from us.

*Cabot* groans, giving away his blanket. His face shows drawn and the hair 'round his temples white. He is only twenty-two. He trembles, and when you speak to him leaps as if the very devil were at his flank.

He asks the sergeant: "Do you think we are going to attack?"

"Of course we attack!" returns the other, brutally.

The *caporal* sways. His lips twitch beyond control. He tries to hold himself together and issues his usual commands with high, shrill voice.

"That fellow is going under from shell-shock," somebody tells me, seeing him quiver,—“or is he sick, or has pneumonia?"

"No pneumonia," retorts an old-timer. "Trench-life never breeds pneumonia. Go into the 'Hotel le Crillon' for that."

It is so.

*Papa* Niclausse appears suddenly, calling the whole company together.

"*Mes enfants*,"\* he says, "I will first show you the new grenade. It is, you see, shaped like a pear and half-covered with aluminum in the shape of a spoon. The spoon is attached to the pear with a small wire. Break the wire and the engine is ready for use. As long as you hold it firmly together, it will not explode, but once let the spoon separate from the balance, a tiny spring sends it apart and in five seconds it shatters."

We are given six of these each, which loads the *musette* very nicely. A *poire* † weighs half-a-pound. Some of the boys also call them "*cullière*," which means spoon.

"Now," *Papa* Niclausse continues, "I expect every man to do his duty. The 8th Company has established a reputation which must be lived up to. It will never do to lower the standard. For the sake of those brave boys who died fighting up in La Targette, I want every newcomer to pledge himself to go through to the end—to stand against the enemy and exchange blow for blow. Remember France! Remember the *Patrie*! *Ne flanchez pas!*" ‡

\*My children, a favourite way of an officer addressing soldiers in France.

†Pear, nickname for this grenade.

‡Never give up!

Silence.

Then a ringing cheer! The old 8th is doing herself proud!

But outside the circle is a small, shivering form that shudders, twitches and ashens clear to the lips.

Poor little *caporal*.

"Now, what shall we have—wine or beer?"

"*Pinard!*"\* Unanimous.

"Then a *corvée* go up to Valmy this afternoon and buy a litre for each man in the company. *Eh bien, mes enfants.*"

Assignments are given out—each man entrusted with some special duty.

"I," says Catelain, "am a trench-cleaner."

"So am I. And *cabot.*"

A trench-cleaner is an after-comer, as it were. He passes over the ground after the first wave has swept on, negating any attempt of the enemy to revivify—to strike the attackers in the back. In Arras there was too much of this 'possum-playing by the wily Teutons. Our boys fell, stricken in the rear, and the second wave had as much to-do going over as if there had been no first.

In this instance it is the 160th will attack, and pass on, and we—the "*coup de grâce*" company—will finish up the work so nobly initiated. Fritz will either go to the rear a prisoner—if he has had the good sense to throw his *Mauser* aside before we reach him—or he will blaze away and go blazing into h——! There is to be no alternative. He cannot lie low like a mummy, and then, when the offensive has gone over, leap up for a salvo! That does not work—a second time.

Our *copain* from the South of France assures us, with much snuff-tobacco, that he is a signaller. He carries flags to speak the artillery; and another boy has rockets, in case night overtakes us before victory. We all have gas-masks, fresh ones with *lunettes*; † likewise 250 cartridges, a *boîte*

\*Wine.

†Eye protectors.

*de singe*,\* half-a-pound of chocolate, coffee, sugar, and condensed soups as a reserve ration.

The evening moves under the stimulus of wine—that extra litre. By 19:00 o'clock we bid farewell to Hans. One o'clock finds us passing through Massiges—in ruins!—and approaching the *Borne* 16. We go right on. The *boyaux* behind the first-line trenches become our sleeping quarters, and we rest on the tough, wet soil until morning—Saturday, the 25th day of September.

### *The Battle of Beausejour*

I am awake by seven o'clock. A fine rain is falling. My bones ache and a chill has penetrated deep. "Wake up, *cabot*!" I scream very loud,—“and give me my *gnole*.”

The bombardment is at this time very heavy. The *caporal* carries a reserve stock of brandy for each man. Poor *cabot* rouses with a start and is immediately twitching.

“What is the matter—have you got a chill?”

“I—I g-guess s-so!”

Can't hear him. His lips are moving. He acts rather dazed, and I doubt if he is in his right mind. The cannonading has put him all to the bad.

“Well, drink some liquor; probably that will revive you.”

Mechanically he goes at getting some out but his hand shakes so he spills half over the *quart's* side.

“Here, let me.”

I take some out and pour it down his lips. He blubbers inanely. A large shell whistles over and he jumps suddenly, shrieking. I see the *sous-lieutenant* coming; I address him.

“*Mon lieutenant*, this man is not fit to go on.”

“What ails him?”

“Stricken.”

“Bah—drunk!” he rejoins. “Tell him to go on!”

I could strike him, I am so furious. Poor *cabot* goes

\*Tin of beef.

shaking on, whining at intervals, and sinking down in a heap. His squat figure is in the *sous-lieutenant's* way coming back and he orders him out with no gentle voice.

"Never mind," says Catelain, looking at me with a black brow, and getting his voice in between the reverberations, "that scurvy trick will cost him. You will see."

I am nonplussed.

At 9:00 o'clock we are moved to the first-line trenches. The 160th is in the *Parallèle du Départ*. Thirty minutes later they go over! We are still in the first lines, *qui-vived* and throbbing with emotion. A tremendous spectacle arises! It is one of these few wonderful effects of a by-gone warfare: a *charge de cavalerie*!\*

The 5th Huzzars of Nancy charge right in the face of the foe, running the gauntlet to the trenches, men and horses rising superbly to the effort and clattering with a zip! and a roar! to the crest of Hades!

The first squadron passes safely. The second, charging after, is locked in the barrage! A mad fire comes winging in—Germany wild to stem this rushing tide . . . Riders and mounts go spraying right and left, springing into the air, churning, splattering, tearing, ripping, flying, shrieking, groaning—the demoniac cries of torn life-shreds floating out in an orgy!

Zipp—zang—crrashh—whrroar!!

Dust and particles obscure the scene. When it clears the first wave is engaging on foot with the infantry—mounts struggling in the barbed-wire mesh and tearing off great gobs of flesh. Legs are shattered . . . animals stampeding . . . a carnage of garbled gore tells the tale: a second legion that struck after the first, wore its spurs bravely and died, a sacrifice upon the altar of modern civilised warfare—the Fifth *Huzzards*! †

We advance into the German first-lines. The definations are shallow. So heavy has been our bombardment, almost no depth remains to the trenches. They are soft, soaked with

\*Cavalry charge.

†Hussars.

bodies and blood. The soil gives in, crashing us into dug-outs and declivities. I leap in and sink—coming up sharply before a *guitoune*. My feet strike against timbers. It is undestroyed and hollow. I call down:

*"Il y a des Fritz en bas?"\**

No response.

Down goes a hand-grenade. There is a sudden smothered roar, a scrambled sound—deep cries—moans! Eleven burly *boches*, streaked with blood, appear at the opening.

*"Kameraden Franzosen, nicht kaput! Cinq petits!"*

Their hands are upraised. They evidently mean: "Do not kill us, we have five children each!" Photographs of women and children are clutched on high.

My *copain*, Catelain, laughs.

"That is a funny thing, they all have five children! What a strange country is Germany where the children come regulated to order!"

No doubt some one of their number, understanding French, has warned them to appear family-fathers so they should merit our pity.

We line them up in a row and Catelain goes through their pockets. After this they offer us cigars and cigarettes, and one of their number a chased gold watch.

"What is this?" There is the miniature of a beautiful girl on the cover.

The owner responds in halting French, "She is of the ballet. *Tres belle, n'est-ce pas?"*

We march them off to the rear, Catelain in front. The last man to leave bears a livid scar across his face. He bristles with rage and his teeth bare like fangs.

"Move on!" I prod him with my bayonet. He flares around and his purple face distorts, so the scar becomes welt-like and horrible. "What is the matter?"

*"Schwein! Ich bin ein officier!" †*

I retort: *"Je ne fout pas mal ce que tu es! ‡* You either

\*Any Fritzes down below?

†Swine! I am an officer!

‡I don't give a d—— what you are!

go ahead or you stay here for good! Is that clear?" I tickle him with the *rosalie*\* and he squirms. The procession proceeds as far as the *Parallele du Depart*, where the *Territorials* relieve us of our catch.

On the fighting lines there is mad battling in progress, proceeding ever deeper into the *boche* front and farther from ours. The *Fortin de Beausejour* is the hot-bed at present. This stronghold is fortified like a "Helgoland," and tunnelled, with labyrinthian passageways deploying every which way. They groan like catacombs, hollowly and with dank odours.

We are estranged from the regiment, and in that morbid channelling lost as completely as in a void. Only the echoing storm and stress of the embittered thousands—explosion after explosion resounding and clutching at the air—serves to stimulate action in that grotto. The *boyaux* are ravaged beyond any rational description. Slaughter, that phantasmagoria of corrupt human consciousness, stalks with merry maundering through her vales, laughing, mocking, chirruping even at the frightfulness of her devastation—human atoms choked so ungrudgingly into the mouth of Hell, that the nether-world disgorges, spreading her hæmal breath through the dismal jargon! The wrecks lie about—foemen locked and interlocked, broken, bent and corrupted—too vile to notice.

Other trench-cleaners are spurring their noble efforts. The 2nd Company rests after four hours' battle, and the captain is moodily trying to resurrect his hosts.

"Have you seen the 8th Company, *mon capitaine*?" enquires Catelain, a dandy in crimson and clay.

He returns to him: "It is better you shall remain here. I don't know where your company is."

A counter-attack is launched by Fritz. We storm ahead. Moving like a mass of demons, gritting our teeth, prodding where human flesh can contact our *rosalies*, we drive the *boches* into two files—and into confusion. We break through! We stab to left and right. We fire point-blank,

\*Bayonet.

with the *lance pierre*\* at a man's temple! We beat and jab and thunder and roar—and annihilate. We break up as much Kaiser-power as possible. We plough through into his territory. We force the boches to their knees, stealing their trenches and soddening their soil—which is ours!

*"On les aura! On les aura!"* †

A hundred throats roar this in concert. We beat the German heavy counter-attack and stack the prisoners, with their weapons thrown aside, into a subdued lot.

*"Kamerad Franzos!"*

Each pair of hands goes into the air, beseeching. The fierce-faced Teutons become an humble choir. They are "marched by one" to the rear.

We are now fifteen trench-cleaners from the 8th, assembled through the various *boyaux*.

The captain addresses us.

"Stay here. It is too much of a rake-hell to go out. Find yourselves a *guitoune*, but take good care it is not inhabited already. The bombardment is going to increase. The night will pass here, patching up the parapet. We have to repair it. They will launch another counter-attack very likely."

We act on his advice and uncover four *guitounes*. Cate-lain propels a grenade down the first. It explodes loudly, churning up dust. We gingerly step in. Dead men—*mac-cabés*, four—five—eight of them—frightfully disfigured!

*"Pas pour moi!"* ‡ I back out, shuddering.

The second is as bad—or nearly so—as the first. With the addition that a trench-rat is parading over the ground.

The third has its centre split out through the bombardment. A shell seems to have ricocheted into the midst of a dozen men, rendering them food for the crows.

"Pitch Fritz out and let us settle down here!" exclaims one of the men, discouraged.

"Not here. The port is too badly exploded. Try one

\*Rifle.

†We get them! We get them!

‡Not for mine.

more," rejoins a *copain*. Catelain has already done this. He has great initiative. He ventures in without the precaution of a shell, and the grocery-stock of goods he uncovers sends up a shout of joy from the assemblage.

"Well, Fritz is good! This is a canteen worth a ransom!"

We dive in headlong and distribute a quantity of stuff: chocolate, condensed milk and jams, apple-sauce, canned fruits and beans, peas, asparagus, smoked ham, sausages, bacon and biscuits; and cigars and tobacco, matches; and small mustard-pots, sealed and bearing labels stamped with Hindenburg's picture, or Bismarck's. A barrel is almost brimming with beer, and a dozen bottles of wine, flattened on the floor, are a cheery sight. Further discovery announces five litres of *gnole*.\*

Beneath this retreat of provender is a further one containing beds and some clothing. The evacuation must have been in the nature of rout, since intimate garments and souvenirs are abundant. The officers, inhabiting here, were also gentlemen of some quality, as the crested pipes and monogrammed stationery attest.

We seek immediate intercourse with the beer-barrel. This travels through three rounds, and then, the news having gone abroad of a tremendous discovery, troops from the neighbouring companies clutter in, and the stores go out like a candle! Every mother's son of them annexes something. It is laughable to see them go after wine, each man reaching for a bottle, tossing it off with a neighbour and replacing it in its identical position. Then the next troop, following after and acclaiming their "find" with shouts of glee, raises the bottles—empty! and replaces them in disgust. Up they go again. Down they go again. Up they go—down—up—and so forth, until every man within a kilometre's radius has stolen over and lifted up the fakes! Chagrin sits on each face.

"Never mind, boys," says the captain. "There will be

\*Brandy.

others. Mind you fix the *parapet* and all will be forthcoming."

He coaxes them into obedience and very soon the trench is once more reinforced. The rain slings down. In great slithering gobs it commences to play a tattoo on our helmets. We groan in the face of night.

"Well, let me sleep," grumbles Catelain,—“I don't care.”

"All right, my friend, but just harken—here comes the music!"

A cannonading loudens out above the chorus of our own, and *marmites* sing overhead with dismal intent from the Germans. The counter-attacks are launched in the dead of night, shells screaming murderously and smashing on the *parapet* in deadly earnest. We are kept awake and on the defensive the whole night. Soaked to the skin, begrimed, laden with filth—the dawn finds us still *fusil*\* in hand and blood-shot, straining eyes watering over the *parapet*.

The heavy shelling withdraws along with the rain. We breathe and relax from the vigil. The aspect is a fright! Jargoggled forms lie beaten half into the earth. The *tranchée*† is a dismay.

"Come, *copain*, let us withdraw to the abode of peace—our *cachibi*." Catelain drops with a weary groan into his shelter, and I follow closely. Our few cans of asparagus and beans are cold but inviting. We make a good meal. No wine is there, and no water in our *bidon*,‡ but we lap up the juice of the vegetables like nectar.

The 26th of September is sunny but knowing no rest. The company is moved, filing through a long line of *boyaux*, horrible with sights and slushy from clay and water. At 13:00 o'clock we issue into a valley. It is the "*Ravin du Fer de Lance*," which means "The Valley of the Iron Lance." The 4th Regiment of Zouaves is deployed on the slope. It is khakied and efficient-looking, and awaiting marching orders. We are joined with this horde and imme-

\*Gun.

†Trench.

‡Canteen.

diately ordered to scoop out small dug-outs as a temporary protection against the shelling that increases as the day wears on and is expected to be frightful by nightfall.

I suggest to two dusky huskies—my comrades in the dug-out—that we proceed down the valley for water. They look rather dubious.

"Go along," says Catelain, who is in on my reputation with the 8th Company. "When he is with you, you cannot be killed!"

"Well, that will be miraculous," asserts the fellow, "since the gas-shells are coming over there in torrents."

"Never mind. Take your mask." I lead the way. The French batteries have been advanced, according with the infantry offensive, and posted along the valley bottom like sentinels. They are firing heavily and quaking the earth. A deep roar and reverberation breaks out with each small flame from the cannon-mouths. Horses in frantic gallops are parading the slope.

"Look out—here is a terror!"

What the Zouave refers to is a mad animal charging in our direction.

"Never mind—he will veer!" I retort.

But he does not. He is crazed. He leaps and grunts and flies over the ground with his eyes boiling from his head like pop-balls. He lunges directly at me . . . my Zouave friends pull me to one side—we roll in the meadow. The horse passes by us, heat from his body mingling with the wind. He is wild with fear—panic! How many times have I not felt the same apparition of terror?—of blinding, bursting. . . .

Well, then there are many wrecks of horses and men in the valley. Broken caissons and steel bits scatter over the terrain, morbid in their suggestion. The stinking corpses of horse-flesh are a nesting-place for flies that clutter and feed. Those wounded quadrupeds that are able to lick themselves, do so; others cavort with bleeding wounds, roll in the dirt, or squeal like whistling-bombs.

Now the gas-shells come over. We are in direct line.

Our masks prove effective and we leap, and then, crawl through. The batteries roar and bombard. The wounded writhe in agony. The horses run. We look like great-headed ogres, stalking through Hades.

In the evening, when we have returned safely and been accordingly congratulated, a great surprise looms up. Catelain shouts: "Hola! See, who is this coming toward us like a spectre!"

But a very welcome "spectre" it is—Papa Niclausse! He, with the balance of our company, has been in line not very far removed, and is proceeding now toward headquarters.

"Well, boys, we gave you up for lost! How many are here?" he exclaims. We tell him twelve. "That is good because we have lost just twelve. You can fill up the ranks."

We hasten over to our old companions. More of them are gone, though, than Papa Niclausse inferred, for twenty are *amoché*.\* Poor *cabot* is gone, and the tyrant—"Grandes-Oreilles."

Catelain shows immediate interest, interrupting our friend from the South of France in the middle of a pinch of snuff to enquire: "The *sous-lieutenant*—tell me, was he shot?"

The *Gascon* eyes him coldly, proceeding with his nip in the most orderly fashion. After this he sneezes, his eyes water and he says, "But, yes. A neater job I have not seen. He des——"

Catelain interrupts: "He was shot by the *boches*? Why the man was German!"

"What is that you say?"

"He was——" lowering his voice, looking around, "how do you know he was shot?"

Several voices join in now—of the *poilus*.

"Why, we saw him fall. It was a disgrace—*cabot* shot him!"

"What—poor *cabot*!" I exclaim.

"He went crazy. But what is this you say about German? The *sous-lieutenant* was a Fritz? *You* are crazy?"

\*Wounded.

"No," explains the *ci-devant* fashion-creator, "I am not. I have a good memory and very little escapes me. Do you remember that day in the *Bois*? Well, he ordered me about with an arrogance that can only be accounted for in a Prussian."

"Pah!"

"No, not pah! I remember him farther back: it was at the *Maison* of the C—— S——, my shop in Paris. I was called in to make a measurement, and there stands the R——, you know of the '*Chatelet*'—she wears the finest on the French stage . . . I make them for her,"—with a touch of pride—"and this man and another with a blond beard."

"'*Excellenz!*' says my *sous-lieutenant* deferentially to the blond beard. And '*Excellenz!*' says Mademoiselle R——, addressing him in turn. And '*Herr Excellenz*' speaks in a thick tone, markedly German, and pays the lady compliments."

"Maybe he also pays her bills!" spits out the *Gascon* venomously. "But how does that prove the *sous-lieutenant* a German spy?"

"It doesn't. But I just thought—here he is with an '*Excellenz*' and with a woman of R——'s reputation, whose mother was a '*Frau*,' and——"

"You think too damn much, and anyway we are glad he's dead!"

"Yes, we are!"

"He was a pest!"

"A million devils get him!"

And so on, the company expresses its regret (?) at the passing of the *sous-lieutenant*. But one of the old boys, who was a "*valet de chambre*" before the war in Strasbourg, nods his head, and addresses Catelain in a low tone.

"What would the *Bureau* have given to know all that? He was hated like poison here, and that is a sure thing."

"*Oui*, my friend; the *Bureau* knows—I think. The lieutenant was watching him."

"Ah! Then it is too bad that *cabot* interfered."

"How did it happen?"

"We passed over the first lines, and then, you see, '*Grandes-Oreilles*' was standing up before the second-line of Germans, and *cabot* right behind him at his heels. Well, then, he had the *lance-pierre*\* so. We were yelling . . . a shell exploded right before us . . . the *sous-lieutenant* hesitated—I don't know what was in his head—and looked around, and that look inflamed the *caporal*, who was right behind as I have said. He started to prance up and down, screaming infernally . . . went insane, and jabbed at the *sous-lieutenant*! The officer had a right—he saw he was crazy . . . he raised his revolver . . . they both shot at the same time, and we went right over into the trenches. We came back from *Fortin Beausejour* another way."

"I see. The two of them are missing."

Catelain remains thoughtful until one o'clock when we are ordered up and on the move.

"So, Americain, I see you are still with us," smiles the lieutenant, as we land on the other side of the *Fer de Lance* in a blaze of rockets.

"Yes. But it may not last long. I have had some pretty close calls."

"You will have plenty yet!"

We are at the foot of the *Fortin de Beausejour* by this time, on the ground that was fought over and conquered by our forces the day previous. The rain energetically plies the soil with its lashes. Dull night lowers. Within an hour the "*Terribles Taureaux*," which is our way of twisting "*Territorials*," arrive on the scene laden with bread—a loaf for each five men—and *pinard* and *gnole*. The day dawns slowly on a shivering miserable crew. We are out in the open, unsheltered, unkempt, saturated without, and equally, it is true, within! A morbid aspect stretches before our eyes: a field of the slain. Perished human and perished animal are likewise putrefying for the carrion-crew. A horrible racket is summoning up all these released souls—blaring in the silence. It is the artillery at the bottom of

Rifle.

the valley—two batteries strong. Constant, insistent, rocking, flaring—the shots fire out.

Ah-ching—ching——

*Marmites* again! German devils' eulogium!

It is now the 27th of September in 1915 and the hour is six. We are ordered to the *boyaux* of the *Fortin*, to pass through these and follow up the former battle with a second. By nine the rain leaves off; we await orders.

"Attack at fifteen o'clock, *mes braves!*" our sergeant says. Shelling follows these ominous words with redoubled vigour, hewing a path for the human hordes to penetrate. The *boches* answer with a formidable barrage.

### *The Battle of the Maison de Champagne*

We throw ourselves flat into trenches of water and clay to obviate loss of life. The barrage fire is a curtain of the most virulent order. It comes out of the throats of small and large batteries simultaneously, being launched with the precise view of forestalling an attack. The light calibres take the front lines, the heavy the reserve. In this way reinforcement is choked off and the initial offensive destroyed.

We are deployed directly in the centre of the attacking columns, with the 2nd Battalion of *Chasseurs* from Lunéville, the 11th Division from Nancy, and the Moroccan Division—which has previously been attached to our corps—on the left; and on the right the Colonial Army from the "*Main de Massiges*." The trenches are badly wrecked—consequently easy to evacuate. Half-level to the surface terrain, it needs only a signal to depart to place us in the running against Fritz.

Papa Niclausse holds watch in hand. Fifteen o'clock—he must be exact! The roaring atmosphere thuds. The moments spin around. He gives the order—he leads the way—he leaps the *parapet*—he draws breath for the advance. . . .

He cries,

"Eighth Company, *en avant!*"\*

And—Papa Niclausse is no more!

Holy Mother! One has got him through the brain! Eighth Company, *en avant!* EIGHTH COMPANY, EN AVANT! We widen our eyes, distend our nostrils. We press our lips firmly together—and go!

A deluge of mitrailleuse fire and shrapnel comes over. The ground tears and explodes—the stones ricochet in the air—the black smoke rolls. Heavy cannonading bears its fruit and bodies fly in fifteen directions!

We drive forward, ploughing through the hail. So many men have fallen our lines are straggly. The *boches* then are driven in the open. Like rats emanating from cess-pools, they come out of their last holes. They fall back—battling in the fields. Since the pregnable yester-eve there was no time to throw up a fresh earthworks for our vanquishing foes and they fall to their knees, coming rifle-to-rifle with our lines. A fat, rather squatty *boche* opposes me. His rifle belches. I duck. Mine is levelled. He awaits annihilation. It jams. . . . I cannot fire—it is clogged with clay from the trenches. He raises again. Again that uncomfortable draught of air beside the ear! I crouch dizzily and my hand touches something—another *fusil!* † I raise it in triumph—fire! He ducks. He rises. I leap forward—we contact with bayonets! Now there is a duel, heavy saw-edge *Mauser* against stiletto *Lebel*. I have my hands full—he is powerful. . . .

"Cristi!"

A crash of a rifle beside me, and he goes over! It is Catelain! We press on after the lieutenant together. He is leading the company.

"*A droite!* The right is retreating!"

We go right, following the order without questioning it. It has been issued by a sergeant, carrying on from the *commandant*, and we lose the lieutenant. In that inferno it is a marvel any order prevails.

\*Forward.

†Gun.

"Which way, Catelain?" We hesitate, nonplussed. The sergeant is on his knees, firing at the enemy; he shouts: "Are you coming, Americain?"

I respond: "Lead on—I will follow!"

I mean Catelain and myself. We start after him. He takes only four steps and reels like a tipsy roisterer. I hear Catelain commence to laugh,

"Courvoisier, what is the matter with you?"

He makes no reply. He swings about on one foot, rocking to and fro, a froth of blood forming on his lips—and over-balances. The thud of his body contacting the earth is like a log, and he bounces slightly.

Catelain looks dazed. His mouth twitches. "Stone dead," he mumbles, and hesitates on that borderland. I have my senses clearly and they tell me to move on. Which way? Behind the *commandant*? He drops wounded . . . he clutches his side. . . . Now the battalion is without command.

"*A droite!*" commands my silent voice. I move right. I go up a sharp hill. Malevolent thunder rocks the slope underneath. Rifle bullets churn the air overhead.

Boom—boom—tzing! Whrroar—cthung!

Boom! Crrashh! Whrroarr!

Boom! Boom!!

Is there no path out of this—no opening? Are we in a blind alley. A cul-de-sac—being led into the slaughter-pen? Can no man escape? Must all living be churned and burned alive? What volcanoes! What monstrous demon's blare! What up-heavings on earth! What man-made corruption—bloodshed—insanity!

Half-way up the whole hill-face becomes a blaze—it dies again! A shriek and agitation in the air is followed by draughts. Puffs of wind steal by—tickle my ears! Noise looms up again. Long waving grasses go over underneath the scythe—men! Cries, like deep-wounded animals at bay, wring from agonised throats of—men! Crushed and bleeding husks lie trampled, vomiting bowels of what were once—men! And foremost, and fairest, and number-

ing their survivors by not a single, solitary soul, are the officers! *The officers!* The clan of the noblest and most heroic of French families—wiped out—shorn to a man—officers!

The mêlée is so enormous we go up jargoggled with Chasseurs, Zouaves, Tirailleurs, Colonials, Soudanese and Senegalese, Parisians, Alsatians—in the face of the most withering death-volley that ever spat from German guns in a land of peace and plenty!

There is a moment of hesitation—of consternation. When panic rides easy and hysteria sits on the wind! Every pair of eyes rolls dazedly—every soul revolts—every stomach nauseates—every tongue licks. Breaths are bated—the demon death cavorts! Fall back? Shall—shall—sh-al-l—we-e?

*Ooo—la-la—ooo—la-la—ooo—la-la—ohh!*

A blaring blast rings to the cerulean sky, blanketed by char and smoke. A cheer goes up—voluminous—mighty! The Zouave clarion! It is the first time we have heard it at the front. Melodious—irresistible! It drives us at the enemy! It is an electric bolt, flaring up the back, stinging into the very vitals of each *poilu*—hurling him in the face of his foes!

We go over that hill like tigers—wild leopards! Shell and thunder cannot daunt us—flame not break us! We dare to assail—assault the impregnable! Our Arabs are bellowing demons; our negroes, pagans—barbarians—brutes, hissing, crying to their heathen gods—beseeching their idols! Screams and shouts and *holas* announce the cyclone. It advances—it is undeniable—it overwhelms the Teutons . . . they cast about, fear rides them—they run!

We are after, and now the retreat is turned into a rout. They abandon mitrailleuses, rifles and grenades, ammunition, coats and helmts. Everything is cast aside in the mad panic of the moment.

And then—we pursue them too far. In our glee—in our brutish, savage exuberance, we sweep all before us—but *what of that behind?* Our own artillery sweeps us now

cutting off our retreat in the face of fire! We are caught between opposing walls of explosives. The ordnance bel-lows—it deluges us—it casts about raining particles, and black men fall like charred limbs! The German batteries lie before us, dead in their deadness—deserted. A great Zouave leaps on a cannon-mouth, waving his little red flag gloatingly to the atmosphere. The winds take it—spread it; the sanguine messenger reads true: our artillery curtain ceases.

We look at one another. Our faces are black—our *capotes* bloody. The hill and the *Ferme Champagne* are ours!

Slowly the shadows of night encircle the scene. Our order is to remain. But who sent the order? Nobody! We have given ourselves the respite. We sit in a shell-hole. . . .

"Nothing to do but smoke," says Catelain, rolling a *seche*.

Ah-ching—ching—ching——

He looks at me: "Is this a life, my *copain*?"

Boom! Cthung—whrrroarr!

Like a pelt of hail rattling down, huge particles as big as nuts bombard us! As big as nu— Why—they are nuts! To be sure, a walnut tree spreads its lusty branches over our retreat and a good-sized shell, singing its way over, sends enough of the fruit into our laps to charm an Eden! The green outer-shells fall off easily as it is nutting-time. We play the rôle of chipmunks.

Very soon a straggling volley, breaking over, announces Fritz's resumption of hostilities. The enemy is counter-attacking from the *boyaux*. We leap into a nearby trench, half-completed and partially-protective, and return the fire. Fortunately some of the *Chasseurs* have rockets left. These go up in a blaze of signals for our barrage.

"Draw a bead on that miserable there," directs Catelain, his own ammunition out—pointing to a helmet. I do so and fire, but the *culasse* \* jâms. The barrel is scorching

\*Breech-block.

hot. I toss it aside in favour of a *Mauser*—a big German beauty, as weighty as it is efficient. It is clumsy, with the regular *boche* rough-finish, but clip-loads, and the barrel is half-covered with wood. There is plenty of ammunition in the trench to fit this monster. I go at it hammer-and-tongs, and have the satisfaction of doubling the output of my *copains* each. The *Mauser* system can then fire two-to-one on the *Lebel*! This is an interesting experiment; while they are rolling them into the magazine, I simply slip in the *chargeur*—a brace of five cartridges on a brass clip—and am ready-loaded for a volley. The *boche* bullets are lead, steel-coated and sharp; ours, also pointed but of solid copper.

After twenty minutes the counter-attack simmers down and the enemy has once more "*tomber sur un bec*," that is—stubbed his toe. We deepen our works, pile up the *parapet*; fresh troops come in to reinforce us. My record for escapes under difficulties begins to be a slogan in the regiment. It is "Send the Americain!" "*Certainement*, the Americain can get through!" Therefore an officer from the reinforcements, looking about for a possible messenger, pounces on me.

"Do you know where is the brigade, *mon brave*?"

"*Oui. A la Borne Seize*."\*

"Take this message. There is no answer."

I take along my friend Catelain as well.

"We may find our company on the trip. I would rather fight under De Courcy than any other."

"So would I!"

He is the commander now of the 8th. Since Papa Niclausse went out—which is a heart-tragedy to us all—De Courcy, gallant and sympathetic, commands most of our sentiment. He is admirable! He is in every way a first-rate officer, and a friend to all.

We pass out of the *boyau* and over the open field—the battle-ground of the past hours. It is night. The moon is streaming. Pale, opalescent beams cast over the whole

\*Yes, at the Borne 16.

morbida, lighting into occasional prominence some wan face up-turned to the stars. There is a general moan from the wounded. The throats cry for relief from their parch-ment.

"Water! Water!"

Groans rumble, solemn and chilled.

"Oh, *camarade*—oh, *camarade*, I suffer! Kill! *Tué moi!*"

Another cry, high, piercing. "Oh, Mother of Mercy!"

And others—from young boys—a single word,

"M-o-t-h-e-r!"

My eyes choke with tears. Terrible sight! *Boche* and *poilu* alike—humped on that meadow of carnage, indistinct clothes—heaps, armless, limbless, headless—soulless! A fit circling-ground for vulturous desire.

A half-raised figure clutches at my *capote*.\* It has hands like any mortal, and arms, and a face—but no nose! And one of the ears is missing. And it is sniffing—choking——

"Kamarad—kama——"

A *boche!*

"*Dieu!*—let us get out of this or I go mad!" Catelain exclaims, shoving at me from behind. I have the most morbid sensation. I am wandering in a section of the underworld. Hades stretches before me and all the souls of Pluto's realm doing penance. For what? For king's greed or nation's lust, or the unholy sepulchre of hate? I am in no hurry. I don't know fear—and panic is a negligible quantity. Here, in this un-human surroundry, my better self closes in and the outer shell callouses. What if men die—from ferocious motives? What if they stab and lust and slaughter and turn beasts? Is that any reason to sympathise? If one condone the motive, why question the result? Why crow first and sob after? Why not sob first and crow after! That is what I am doing. No more morbid thoughts. Men shall be things, living by the sword—dying by the sword; a great pawn for a monstrous stake. What is that stake? Why it is—yes, what is it? No matter

\*Coat.

that either. One always gets along into the same circle arguing nations. War is war! It is a snake with its tail in its mouth.

So, go on and cry "Mother!"—vapid faces with hidden horns! I shall step over and upon you with no more compunction than a snail. I shall see dead men, smell dead men, eat beside them, drink over them, breathe them, hear them beating their way into another soil—and, promptly forget them! I am hardened. I am through. . . .

Right there and then I know I am metamorphosed—become a thing God never wanted me to be—insensible to humane feelings. I shall know hysteria no more.

We enter into the horrible *boyau* leading to the *Borne* 16. It is slumped with dead men. We slip through, shadowy, under the subtle guardianship of the moon, and I laugh as Catelain slides over a *maccabé*, skinned on one side.

He looks at me.

"A good *ecorché*, *n'est-ce pas, mon copain?*" I smirk. I mean by this that the dead man would make a good anatomical model for a clinic on the muscular system, since he is deprived of his skin.

"Americain," says Catelain, "I believe you are going crazy."

"Oh, no, Catelain," I reply, "I am just getting sane!"

We follow to the *Borne Seize*. It is now seven o'clock and it is the 28th of September. The battles of the Champagne have been fought through two chapters: *Beausejour* and *Maison de Champagne*. I deliver my message, which is not complex, and advance to the Territorials. These boys,—they are more than that: from forty upwards!—always have a good soup and *bricheton* \* and wine. Every sort of soldier swamps this *Borne*. The jumble is extraordinary and dense. We fill our *bidons* † with water and light a *seche*. Ah! boys from the 8th are down for the same purpose and together we start for the *Fer de Lance* to re-

\*Bread.

†Canteens.

join the old company. Directly before us three heads protrude from a shell-hole cautiously to scout, *bearing pointed helmets!* We see them—they see us, it is simultaneous! They are inside our new lines. Up go our rifles—up go their hands! We advance and investigate. It is a triumvirate of German *unter-offiziere*,\* a little gaunt, a little wan, and thoroughly cowed. They have been in this shell-hole for three days. So, at least, says one, fraternally, and in French. Various wounds are now exhibited. One opening in the calf of the leg; the second in the belly; the third in the upper arm. They are all quite faint. Just at this time the *marmites* of their compatriots commence a lively tune. Shells hum over. Promptly we disgorge the contents of an *as de carreau* † on the back of a *maccabé* ‡ humpled nearby. It vomits a *boite de singe* § and biscuits. This ghoulish food is pounced upon by the ravenous *amoché*, and, besides a drink from our canteens, constitutes all we can do for them. We pass on.

We lose ourselves in the labyrinth of *boyaux*. The shell-ing increases and draws unbearably close.

"*Hé! Un train de plaisir!*" ¶ shouts the *caporal* of the *corvée*. We duck into a dug-out, pitchy-dark and dank. I light a candle and here is an erubescient sight. The floor is paved with blood. It has partially dried in, so a deep, rich tone of pompaic flamboyance is imparted to everything; and this flares before the rays of the candle a cruel sight. Two men are poised against a wall of the *guitoune*. One wears the Colonial khaki of a Zouave; the other the greenish-grey of Father William. Through the belly of one is the bayonet of the other; through the belly of the other the bayonet of the one. Now, that serves as a brace. Both are leering. Both seem determined to hold vigilance until the crack of doom!

\*Under-officers.

†Knapsack.

‡Dead man.

§Can of beef.

¶Pleasure train, i.e., whistling shell.

"*Nom d'un diable!* Have you ever seen anything just like that?" the *caporal* enunciates, tremulous.

Drip! Drip—drip! Drip!

The crimson stream is flowing. The stench is slowly rising. The faces of all are blanched. The sauce-pans ring overhead. Hand-to-hand encounter must have been the rule all through these *boyaux*, since similar sights are to be found along the line at frequent intervals. Corpses of Zouaves, shredded into minutest particles, mingle their ash with *boche*-dead, equally minced. The whole putrid crew is spread through the trench almost level to the land, and, agitating there with each fresh burst of artillery, what is left is ground, what is ground is churned. Then the whole process commences over again—a sullen determination on the part of the batteries to fertilise as excellently as possible this part of the Champagne! Grenades must have their way, and generations their wine.

We start out with the first lull. There is no choice—over we must go. The *caporal* starts through the sickening pile on hands and knees, in hopes not to sink too infernally deep. It *sough-soughs*—gives gently beneath him—sucks him down. He crawls on—we follow. We wallow—we wade on. We nauseate and our stomachs vomit. We choke, slimily crawling—through that dense human-flesh; our hands slide over the slipperiness, clutch, expel! Thus along for a hundred and twenty metres. No opening in the *boyau* to let us through? We crawl back again. Back and forth—ever back and forth—the *caporal* leads us, looking for a break in the trench-wall . . . the slime-dance continues— At last we face the portal, we exit—green, streaked with red. Is that the colour of a hedge-row—of a heath, or fern-bog? No—our faces! We look like butchers' whelps. Up to our knees and our elbows in cochineal—the pigment of France's age-old slaughter!

An officer comes eye-to-eye with us just around the turn of the trench. His look freezes—the pupils of his eyes dilate with horror. He is too stunned to speak even after we address him. Finally,

"The 8th Company is on the left," he gasps in reply to the enquiry. "Remain, until<sup>1</sup> after the barrage, in some *abri*."

We do this. We smoke and dream and sleep, and after the dark we start out again toward the lines. It is not far. In half an hour we face the lieutenant, De Courcy.

"You, Americain? I see we cannot lose you. Take a position to the left—it is the hottest there." He waves me away. I can hear him chuckle to the sergeant.

But how woefully small has become that ardent company! Before twenty metres I am at the end. A small Parisian is here, winking and trying to keep awake. I am reminded of "La-Terreur" and we speak together.

"Well, I see you are sleepy; supposing you sleep?" I say at length because the poor little fellow has no more backbone.

"*Merci*. But call me early if Fritz wakes up."

I promise this. He grunts and rolls up in a *guitoune* and many hours pass. Toward morning the 2nd Battalion of *Chasseurs* comes over to relieve us.

"Wake up, Velvelong!" I prod my small Parisian with the *lance-pierre*.

He springs to his feet,

"What is it—Fritz?"

"We relieve." I roll a firm *seche* with my left hand. One gets to be expert at this. We start for the *Borne Seize*, and daylight and rain simultaneously find us at the mouth of the *boyau*. Worse predicament than ever! The *Ravin* is so jammed it is necessary to be at the lieutenant's heels continuously to keep from losing him.

"Find shelter where you can," is his order. We scramble for *guitounes*. They are already so full they project *poilus* at every entrance. Then we make for an empty ammunition wagon—Catelain, the *petit* Velvelong and myself, draw up our legs, open our *bidons*—comfort! Between us is a spread of German ham, French bread and apple-sauce. We make short shrift. Drip—drip—drip go our *capotes*. We are soaked clear through. But there is

one comfort: it has washed off the blood-lust—the hideous nightmare of corpse-scaling.

We light a *seche*.

At ten we are ordered to the lines once more with the battalion, to reserve near the *Fer de Lance*. The particular *boyau* is close to the *Fortin de Beausejour*. Again the rain ceases and the sun supersedes and we dry our clothing and rejoice at the wash. In fact, it is good to rejoice—are we not behind De Courcy? Does he not know the way——

Cristi! He has lost himself!

Again we are ploughing through horrors and again coming out all blushing-red like brick-sweeps! A steady stream of *marmites* cuts through the palpitant air. The clay-dust spumes up, opaquing everything, vanishing cadavers—headless-trunks and trunkless-heads—veiling morbid wreckage. It blows aside and I contact a form in the *boyau*; it lies crosswise, propped up, its skull crushed awry and brains hanging over the telephone-wires by the side of the *parapet*. Arms assail us—without further attachment; legs trip from underneath like police-sticks between a thief's legs. Rifles, bayonets, helmets, knapsacks—an endless confusion of inextricable débris. The trench is full—sanguinary with pools of man-wine, draining, dripping.

It is all of fourteen o'clock before we find the battalion. We are as demonish as before! Stained and soiled and stinking wet, without *guitounes*, meanly protected, target for a hail of lead—entrenched soldiers of France! We dig each a little hole to safeguard what is left whole—our brains and bodies. We creep into these. We sleep. The wife is just putting a steaming dish upon the table; or the sweetheart a steaming kiss upon the mouth; or the children a rollicking game upon the knee—when nightfall brings the company to its feet . . . the lieutenant is speaking,

“—be not surprised, boys—we have to attack in the morning! I know it is bad. We are only sixty men left, but that means we must fight all the harder and I know you will do it.”

"Another battle, Americain?" Little Velvelong appears, wiping his eyes.

"At three o'clock."

"Where?"

"*Ouvrage de la Défaite*," supplies the sergeant, "and it will be a hell-slaughter you may be sure."

This is not encouraging.

"I cannot stand much more of this," mumbles Velvelong.

The sergeant rumbles in his throat: "Who can?"

"Well, he can," says Catelain, designating me. "He comes out of everything."

"I know. America is a marvellous country."

He has evidently heard the lieutenant say this. The *ravitaillement* comes in at 21.00 o'clock. This is the first time since Valmy and that was the 24th of September.

"Good thing Fritz is generous," Catelain mutters. We have been eating at his expense for five days. We take hot *jus*,\* seething *gnole*,† light up the ever-present *seche*.

The sergeant, puffing moodily, sighs several times. "I feel, Americain, as if this were the last," he remarks slowly.

"Last what?"

"The last *seche*."

"I have plenty more."

"No—that is not what I mean. I think it will be *my* last."

"How is that?"

"I have a feeling—I will be killed."

"Nonsense."

He shrugs.

"You have a chance like everybody else in the game."

"The game lasts too long. You see, Americain, I do not bear a charmed life like you." He smiles a little, "I am only—human."

"Pah!" This "charmed" business is getting on my nerves.

\*Coffee.

†Brandy.

"You will survive. We will smoke together many more."

"In Paradise?"

He makes me very uncomfortable. Catelain comes over,

"What is the matter with the sergeant?"

"*Il a le cafard*,"\* I say. "He thinks he will eat the salad by the roots to-morrow."

"He needs what we all need—a decent *bachot*!" †

We have no notion of sleep. The little Velvelong has two letters from Versailles, which he reads with renewed vigour every ten or fifteen minutes.

"You would think he is going to die, the way he keeps on mousing over the *grisette*," complains my *copain*, sniffing contemptuously.

"She is no *grisette*!" exclaims the boy.

"Well, *gonzesse*, then."

"*Gonzesse* neither. I am going to marry her!"

"I hope so," intones the sergeant rather solemnly, so that we goose-flesh all over.

I fill my *bidon* with what is left of the coffee and brandy—a weird mixture. At two in the morning we start forth.

### *The Battle of the Ouvrage de la Défaite*

"*Sac au dos et en avant!*" ‡

Silently, like wraiths in dismal darkness, De Courcy leads through the *boyau*. We are on the front within the hour. "Silence!" is the order of the *commandant*. The surprise attack is launched ten minutes later. We crawl from the *parapet* as noiselessly as a petrified forest of trees gathering momentum. It is darker than Erebus, and equally uncanny. The slightest shower of rain commences to trickle. It makes a gentle patter-patter over the ground. We advance, breathing scarcely, and holding the grenades poised. Shoulder-to-shoulder, shoulder-to-shoulder—eeriness, emptiness speaks almost in the vast solitude. Not a

\*He has the blues.

†Bed.

‡Shoulder knapsacks and forward.

rocket flares—not a shot from the lines, not a murmur from the twin multitudes—not a suspicion of the creeping death.

We are on Fritz!

The first warning—our own exploding hand-grenades hurled with the accuracy of fiends into the narrow defile! A succession of flame driving up at various points—a thunderous detonation, more, more—greater— All at once a piercing shriek slices the night, hideously—then rabble, mêlée—turmoil! The nestling *boches* leap to the *creneaux* like magic—all those that are not *hors de combat*—and a mighty struggle breaks out along the line.

Rifles are discharged; mitrailleuses pour their leaden spume into our ranks; rockets arise and illumine; batteries break into belching, snorting cataclysm with the fierceness and disregard of pagans! The elements, jealous of this usurpation of their barbaric splendours, rave into ferocity, casting lightning in dazzling processions through the sky. Now the whole terrain is rocking like an inferno. The rain falls in torrents, the thunder reverberates—leaps off into the distance! Peal after peal reduces the man-made cannonade to dwarfishness in comparison.

Through this dense, vibrating curtain we fare—battling hand to hand. The *boches* give back, the line bends—breaks! We pour into the earthworks, massacring with ruthless energy. Not a stick or stone is left whole; not a single German taken alive! Those still with two good legs retreat, bringing up far in the rear to the strongly fortified position known as the "*Défaite*." It is a hill. Batteries blare before it—spit venom. We cannot proceed too far. But we do! We go up—and on, staggering with the blood-lust now compelling.

The sinister night-elements persist. They are with us, blanketing our constant gains with the torrential downpour. It serves as a veil—disguises!

I have Catelain on one side and the sergeant on the other. They go with me halfway up the hill. A single shell breaking the ground before us hurls me flat on my face!

I lie stunned—still—the surge goes over . . . I rise and totter—I am alone—upright. On one side, prone, is the sergeant, face up, glaring, his body severed in the middle by a scrap of the explosion. Catelain on the other side is moaning. I go to him and one wrist shows up—a stump! An explosive bullet has done that.

Shall I go on? Behind, is our own reserve force coming up with flashing guns; before—

Suddenly the whole line doubles back and comes down headlong! They have ventured too far. The gun-fire is irresistible. We fall to the reserves and respite there, gathering new energy for the assault. Six minutes later we try a second time.

The lieutenant precedes me. De Courcy says,

"Americain, if you stay with me, you get the 'Croix de Guerre'!"

"My lieutenant, I am with you wherever you go! Lead on!" I reply.

He starts up. He is two leaps ahead, and the company behind us. I see now the attempt is suicidal. A single line of fire bursts out above—it withers down on us. De Courcy hesitates, sways, crumples into my arms! He is dead with six bullets through his breast! A concerted groan goes up from all behind us. They are dropping like leaves. They see their beloved officer fall. I am dismayed! But all at once comes the knowledge we are without a commander and riot sets in. The slow day dawns. It finds us thinning in ranks like a forest of trees in winter. Not many men are left.

"For the third assault!"

It is the order coming up from below. The reinforcements are behind. We must go on . . . it is in the scheme of things, it cannot fail!

We go mad! We are half-crazed! I poise on a rim of earth above a deep shell-hole, silhouette against the blaze and cry with all my strength:

"*En avant, mes copains—on les aura!*"\*

\*Forward, my friends—we will get them!

A white-hot flash paralyses my eye-muscles for an instant . . . all goes black!

On the 30th of September in bright daylight, I come to. It is in the bottom of a trench, swimming to and fro in the most insecure manner. I blink once or twice—recognise Velvelong. The little Parisian has a red gash across his cheek. He is trying to get the jam out of his rifle.

"Why does this trench rock?" I murmur.

He springs up and comes over to me.

"How do you feel?"

"I don't know. What time is it? Where are we?"

"Two o'clock, and this is a German trench."

"Over the *Défaite*?"

"No. Below. We broke in the assault; we were too few. Here, drink this."

He puts brandy and coffee to my teeth.

"You have been robbing my *sac*, you beggar!" I look at him in admiration. My colour floods back.

Velvelong says impressively: "You tried your best to go out this morning, but you see it is not so easy. You fell into the shell-hole, hollering like a demon, and instead of remaining there, you rose out, screaming like an idiot. You are a fool! The shells coming over like a blanket, I got you by the *capote*\* and pulled you down. Luckily, you stayed there! American, you have the devil's own talisman—you struck your head. Well, that was enough to lay you out. By all the Saints in the Calender, if you had risen a third time, I should have let you die! We were ordered back here—into the first German trench we took in the beginning of the offensive. A Zouave and myself brought you down. We cannot lose the mascot of the regiment," he smiles timidly as if in explanation.

This is unusual consideration!

I think a while . . .

"De Courcy is dead, is he not?"

"Oui."

"And the sergeant?"

\*Coat.

"Oui."

"And Catelain?"

"I believe so. *Amoché*,\* anyway."

"Then who is left?"

"Only you and I in our half-section, Americain. The long line thins."

I settle back with a head that beats like hammers. Hot fever burns. I shut my eyes and think. To Velvelong I owe—life itself! This child—this mere youth of stripling teens, to him I owe—what he deserves! What can a man wish another in this mad rhapsody? Only that he come out of it alive. I wish him that. And that he marry his—his *poule*.†

"See my *sac*—it has been pierced in two places." He shows it to me with pride. "But I am not touched. Perhaps I shall become as immune as you!"

Of course he is a comparative new-comer in the company, or this would be funny. He thinks what the others believed—I bear a charmed life. *Sál*—perhaps I do! My *patte d'épaule* ‡ is shot clean off the shoulder!

We are ordered back to the *Borne* 16. By October 1st, in the morning, we arrive. New *guitounes* have been built and we lodge quite finely—especially so as "the long line" has thinned indeed! The *appel* § shows twenty-seven men remaining from a company of two hundred and forty-five! At Valmy on September 24th—six days before—were two hundred and eighteen souls that will awake to battle no more. We are two sergeants, three *caporals*, twenty men, and Velvelong and I—the Eighth Company! It is amazing.

Reinforcements arrive with the next day-dawn from the depot. In command is a first-lieutenant—the former *sous-lieutenant* of our company in Arras. He went down with a

\*Wounded.

†Chicken—pet name for sweetheart.

‡Padded gun-rest fastened to both shoulders.

§Roll-call.

bullet-wound in his thigh—grilled in the orchard near La Targette.

"Well, Americain," he says, "where are all the boys that were with us in Belgium?"

"I respond: "That is problematical—either in Heaven or Hell."

"*Dieu!* And your stripes?"

I shrug. He takes it I want them, I presume, for two days later I am transferred. It is to the *liaison de commandant*, to handle messages between the *commandant* and the captain, and the post carries "*sardines*."\* I reject these—the earlier reason still holding good for my modesty!—and proceed with the boys ahead of the battalion into the trenches. This is the 5th of October. It is again weeping rain, gentle sadness floating down from the heavens—in pity, perhaps. . . . We cross the *Fer de Lance*. Interminable *boyaux* intersect here. It is pitch black. Who knows the way? Nobody.

"*Voilà*, we are lost! Let us rest in a *guitoune* till morning." This suggestion of one in the company meets with general approval. We search out a place. We are without matches or candle. We shrug and pass in. Evil-smelling is the soil—stenchy, mouldy. A peculiar noise startles. It scratches—scrambles. It is running—jumping. Just a small noise, but unwholesome—scratching now, and crouching—rushing around in squeaky, jerky persistence!

"What is this?" somebody mutters, husky-toned.

We listen again—we feel out. We lie down and try to fall asleep. Nobody sleeps, however. Toward morning the light filters in very leaden. Small forms are crawling over us, picking with their feet at our *bandes moletières*,† marching upon our bellies, investigating with their noses. A hairy something tickles my cheek, sniffs and withdraws. I shudder all over. The fumes from this little something are enormous.

\*Slang for stripes.

†Leggings.

Growing day discovers a loathesome aspect—*maccabés*\* lying in congested heaps in the corners, gnawed over by rats as big as cats, scuffling over the human food. There is a grand circuit race. Papa Rodent out-distances his younger but less athletic son, Mamma hanging off in the distance. She is a voracious creature. She gnaws and slobbers an ear hanging by a slender thread from its correspondent head. The auricle is in a grisly condition.

*Eh bien*, there is good in all things. With so much toothsome putridity, the live *genus homo* is at least undisturbed!

I rise with much celerity from my *bachot*† beside a *maccabé*, breathe deeply with relief—a mouthful of germ-laden air!—and join the hosts who are fighting to the whole front of my *liquette*‡ is a nesting harvest. They are in quantities so supreme that the multiplication-table goes out of business completely! What is there to do but to light up a *seche* and play optimist? We all go out side. We start after the battalion, which has forged ahead and is already in formation for an immediate offensive. The nine o'clock attacking order is, however, countermanded, and the weather turns cold and cloudy. We stand, resting on either foot in turn, in a clayey *boyau* half-filled with rain. There has been no drainage.

"Step on, Americain. See if you cannot move farther up," nudges a *Savoyard*,§ who is smoking. He is deep in a puddle of water with one foot. I move to accommodate him, rolling a *seche* on my own account.

"*Donne moi du rifle!*"¶

He gives me his butt.

Wheeee—crraa-whrroarr!

Tremendous explosion shatters the *parapet*—rocks the *boyau*! I am enveloped in blinding smoke. Dirt flies into

\*Dead men.

†Bed.

‡Shirt.

§Native from the province of Savoie.

¶Give me a light!

every pore—congests the throat. Eyes cloud, backs wrench—a heavy, stunning sensation strikes me behind one ear and I lose breath . . .

"Cristi!" I choke, when everything settles. "*Je suis touché!*"\*

The boys, huddled in wide-eyed dismay, shout:

"What is it, Americain—are you *amoché?*"

"*Jesu!* He is touched in the legs!"

"*Voyez*—the Americain is really done this time! *Mille tonnerre!*"

They presume, of course, now the whole regiment will get it. The blood runs down my cheek, mingling with a crimson stream lower down at the knees. I am soaked, rifle and all. I respond: "Nothing the matter with the legs. I can walk. It is the head."

One of them examines, exclaiming: "La-la, it is nothing—a mere scratch! A little fragment scraped him in passing."

But my bloody knees?

The poor *Savoyard* is accountable for this—he is sliced in two! He was upright; he is now disassociated parts—head and torso in one, thighs and ankles in another. Horrified I ejaculate: "Ah—the *Savoyard!*"

"Well?"

"I was there! He—I—— He told me to move . . ."

We start from the spot, marching silently through the *boyau* until sixteen o'clock. Then we are on the other side of the *Ferme Champagne* and assigned to a sector of the front. The *liaison* holds forth directly behind the first lines. Composed of one man from each company of the battalion, a messenger is therefore constantly at hand to communicate the *commandant's* orders to the captains.

Our nearest *quitoune* is a former *boche*-depot one hundred metres removed. It is well-demolished, badly stocked and gruesomely inhabited—a charming combination! We drag the *maccabés* out. We ransack the stores and find sewing-machines, looking-glasses and rocking-chairs. Fritz

\*I am touched!

has piled in the whole village! News-sheets and letters are also here aplenty; and church-books and rosaries. Nothing of use. Not a litre of beer.

"I prefer the lines and *ravitaillement*," says my closest neighbour, a *caporal*. "Let us go back."

Behind us is the cemetery—a newly-dug and generously-inhabited nest of crosses. The *Territorials* have been interring all night. They shoulder their shovels—parade away. The air is still. The corpses sleep.

Then vibrant, like a hundred humming-bees, a slow tingle awakes. It seems we are getting attuned. We learn to know in advance the suggestion of bombardment. The *caporal* signals me to hurry. I stumble along in his wake, skipping shell-holes. The slow tingle crystallizes—it flares up—it blows over—it whistles by—it jars and strikes! A roar—another—third—

Boom! Whizz—roarr! Boom! Boom!

In the thick of it, there is no way out but to flatten. The *marmites* beat over, gaining momentarily more ferocity. They clatter—they scream and break. They send up whirlpools of clayey dust. Smoke grimes—clouding, circling. We breathe in snatches. A great, gashing curtain of fire rains overhead into the cemetery. It falls on the crosses, demolishing them. It reattacks in rage, churning up bodies. Flesh-pots go bursting—legs—arms—

For a Hades this cannot be matched!

Enchanted, we watch the demolition. Whole half-rotted bodies are cast up in all their filthy nakedness—fearful stench! Clothing, ripped, is tossed to the winds. The whole thing gone over, rebroken, rescrambled—assorted, flung wide again—descended—

Rrrip! Smashh! Whrroar!

We make our way to the *quitoune* with the first lull at night. The *Territorials* file over—the whole graveyard is re-dug—repaired.

The rats and totes keep us on feverish edge the remaining hours. It is one thing to fight—another to feast rodents. Not a morsel of bread remains in the *sacs* by morning. We

are relieved at dawn. We withdraw to Minaucourt—a destroyed village on a destroyed highway. A destroyed cellar serves as a shelter to us through the following nights; our only consolation is in destroying our hunger!

We go next to Gizaucourt. It is warm Autumn. It is a quiet town. It must have been a noisy one. Fighting has carried on here. *Boche* graves litter the countryside; *poilu* crosses, the village cemetery. The Champagne in this vicinity is a sterile waste—it registers no red or white rich wine. "*Champagne Pouilleuse*"\* the natives call it. Troops cram in from the trenches. It is this way they rest, obtaining a few days of respite in snatches from the racking shell-fire.

Little hero Velvelong seeks me out with a wish that we might both be transferred. "I am tired of this monotonous grind."

"Where do you wish to go? It is the same everywhere."

"I know. But a change of scene—anywhere—Paris——" I laugh.

"That reminds me, I have a letter from a Parisian—it is the 'Terreur' from the *Villette* I told you of. He is in a hospital in Neuilly."

"No place for a Parisian!"

"I know it. But he says: (I read) 'It is the worst of luck. One has to drink milk just like a baby. No *pinard*†—no snuffing tobacco. *Diable* for the hospitals!' He is quite emphatic."

We have a good laugh over "La-Terreur's" letter. The balance of it has to do with crutches and a dentist; and he ends up with the inevitable:

"Take it in the *abatis*,‡ Americain, or you will be killed sure!"

"He wishes you all kinds of luck," says Velvelong, as I fold the letter. "Let us go to a *bistro*."§

\*Lousy Champagne.

†Wine.

‡Legs.

§Drinking-house.

It is now October 15th. Fresh reinforcements are heralded in. Some of the Arras boys are back. We depart Gizaucourt three days later, are packed in auto-busses as far as Wargemoulin, and tramped from there to the lines. The 418th Regiment hails us with various demonstrations of joy. They file out and we scramble for locations. We are in a small side trench, communicating between the initial and the reserve lines, and in every way comfortable and solid. Teutons have done this. They have constructed the *quitoune* as a commanding post where a colonel of artillery possibly held forth before our gains. It has two floors and house-keeping privileges, containing stove, bunks, card-table and chairs; telephone booth is adjoining, and all other pre-requisites.

Jean Raas, messenger of the 2nd Company, stretches himself immediately on a bunk. "Leave word—I am not at home," he says, yawning; and amid the laughter of the *liaison*, falls into a deep and noiseless sleep.

This "*Villa Potsdam*," then, becomes our residence for the present. It is so habitable, it is a shame to ever evacuate it. Great iron girders span overhead, padded in with sacks, wooden beams, stones and earth. No 155 millimetre shell could budge it. We are safe!

Our duties are far too light. Which shows that the *genus homo* is never satisfied. We are dying of *ennui*. Overhead rumbles a terror, smashes and breaks with beautiful results, and we are—far below. It is discouraging.

"Perhaps we can get some action at the *Fer de Lance*."

The *caporal* saying this starts out for the *ravitaillement*\* located there. He brings me a letter—from Catelain.

"Well, did you get some action?"

"*Non*. A few *You-Yous*; that is, six men of the 10th went out—they blew up with their own grenades."

"How was that?"

"A new man held on too long. It smashed the *parapet*. Well, what does he say?" He refers to the letter.

\*Food service.

"You know Catelain?"

"Very well."

"He is in a hospital in Orleans. His right hand is blown off."

"He is through then."

He sighs.

In Gizaucourt five days later a new mitrailleuse company is formed. Pierre Rass, the brother of Jean—the messenger of the 2nd —, is a member here. He asks me "Why don't you volunteer, American? We have plenty of good times and no packs on the back."

Now this is true. The wagons of the machine-gun companies carry the personal effects of the crews as well. I hasten to prefer my request. It is accepted, and with it I obtain a *permission* for seven days' respite. These *permissions* are granted every six months if a man has been fighting at the front, and I have been on duty for thirty-four consecutive weeks already!

"When will I get my furlough?"

The sergeant-major replies: "In two or three days—wait."

That night we cook with the new scientific preparation—solidified alcohol. It tests out and is attached to the equipment in Gizaucourt. I take an extra one to the "*Villa Potsdam*" from Pierre Raas.

"Here, Jean; your brother sent you this from the village," I say to him.

He handles it very gingerly, sniffing the alcohol, afraid of a joke.

"What is it?"

"Try." I strike a match, applying it to the tin-can. It flares up. "Don't be scared—it will not explode. It is to cook your *frichti*.\* Now you can eat warm all Winter."

"*Sacre diable!*" He sets his *just*† to boil. "That is a great scheme."

We take our turns at the relief. Some of us go down,

\*Food.

†Coffee.

some come up, but always along the worn road from Gizaucourt to the "*Villa Potsdam*." A violent explosion catches us one night—one of the 105s thundering onto the *guitoune*. It swings aloft a girder, solid steel with the ease of a tooth-pick!—thuds it down into the *boyau*. Vague cries and scrambling of bodies accompany this. There is a jargon of stone and bone. The next day six men, united in effort, are required to put the steel-piece back. They uncover four bodies.

The *liaison*, having very light duties, super-imposes a few. We make finger-rings of aluminum shell-tops. The German 77s have these bands about them, and when any fall near they are immediately pounced upon. A sculptor of the *Montmartre* in Paris erects a clay replica of Papa Niclausse. This calls forth a good deal of lamentation and pathos from the 8th, a company sorrowful to the core. Our late captain is much regretted. We loved him well!

We have a visit from the chaplain who comes to say mass for the departed.

"Inform Lieutenant Lacaverne we should like two representatives from his company," says the *commandant* to me.

I salute and carry word to the 8th.

"Select whom you please," is the reply.

"I should like Velvelong."

"Well, that is impossible," says a sergeant. "He is dead."

"How? Velvelong—the little Parisian?"

"Killed on *poste d'ecoute*."\*

That is sad news for me. I turn away with a tremor. Young Velvelong—with his scarce-formed moustache—his amiable smile and still trebling laughter? Impossible—dead!

"Are you sure?"

"You go, Molière; and take somebody else," says the lieutenant to the sergeant.

We start back together—to mass. Before the ceremony is over a furious barrage-fire bursts all along the line. Sud-

\*Out-post duty.

denly instituted, it is vigorously pursued. The Teutons have been massing for this semi-offensive since our earlier gains. We are sent out by the *commandant* to reconnoitre.

My former company, the 8th, is lined behind the *parapet* for action. Every man is an image—graven. Not a tense muscle moves. Not an eye glances as a *marmite* swings overhead, breaks, ching-chings into the *parados*! Not a rifle responds, not a mitrailleuse fires. Unflinchingly the silent army watches. The shelling keeps up from the German side. Twenty minutes later Fritz comes over!

Immediately a huge red rocket buds up for the 75s. Our batteries break forth—launch a deadly curtain behind the advancing troops, cutting off their reinforcements. They cannot retreat. They are doomed! They stagger—hesitate—persist. . . .

Still no fire from the watching silent line of French. They hold their position, taciturn *lance-pierres*\* poised, brows darker than thunder-clouds in August. The Germans come on. They cross the valley—they approach the entanglements—touch the wire——

*C-c-cras-s-sh-h!!*

One whole line of fire goes smoking upward! One whole contingent falls! The "gully of sighs" becomes a reeking inferno. The *Lebels* blaze and blaze and the mitrailleuses hum! A corn-field waving in brisk Summer style collapses under the scythe. So is this! Not a stalk remains—not an upright man in the whole field of slain!

When the havoc concludes, twelve minutes have been consumed and four German companies wiped clean! All remains quiet along the sector after this period. I make my report to the *commandant*. I go down to the *ravitaillement*. The kitchens are deserted, and all along the *Fer de Lance* traces of shell-fire.

Jean Raas says, seeing the bread- and brandy-wagons intact: "It is just as well; let us help ourselves, my *frangin*."

We dig in with a will. The *You-Yous* sing their peculiar

\*Rifles.

dirge over-head, and in every *guitoune* curious faces are wondering how we will fare in the open. These cooks are the most craven ever!

"*Poltrons!*\* We will rob the entire wagon!" shouts Jean.

"*Espece d'andouille!* You will see what you get from  
—"

Ah-ching—ching—ching——

All heads go in. We duck and escape annihilation.

"Come, that is enough; let us go back." I start up the *boyau*. He follows, reeling from his *gnole*,† and after him the entire *corvée*.

"See here," says one of them, "Jean is drunk!"

"Just let your mother see you, Jean!" shouts another.

"Ah-ha. Pierre will tell her."

"Leave it to him!"

"For shame! For shame!"

They are all guying the poor, ungainly fellow, who blushes rosy red.

"He is one of twins and they come from the *Sus St. Leger*. Their mother raises them like infants. I know her," volunteers a member of the *corvée* in my ear. Nobody minds the *marmites*—nobody, the passing telegraph units.

*Sus St. Leger!* Pierre and Jean! That sounds familiar. When he has slept off his drunk I question him further.

"*Mais, mille tonnerre!* It was your mother served us *pinard* in Arras!" I exclaim. "This is truly marvellous! She told us—we were three then, a tall Parisian from the *Villette*, a boy from Epinal, and myself—that her two were in the Champagne. And tell me, Jean," I say, laughing, "do you wash your ears now? You have no fresh linen in a long time. Shame! Shame!"

The poor boy is covered with the greatest embarrassment. He asks me then about his mother, from whom he has been separated for nine months—the longest period in his life. "Tell Pierre; he will be astounded!"

\*Cowards!

†Brandy.

I promise to do this.

The 5th of November in Gizaucourt a great piece of news comes in: our pay is raised from the munificent sum of one cent a day to the unbelievable fortune of five! Tasting prosperity, then, an expedition puts out over the *parapet* in a snow-blown, misty dawn to reclaim ordnance. There are twelve of us, myself included. We crawl *entre les lignes*, gather together as many rifles and bayonets as possible, bunch them, drag them in—and without a fatality! We sell them back to the *commandant* at one franc each per rifle and ten sous for the *rosalies*.\*

I have thirteen francs and fifty centimes. Extravagant wealth! And all this by daring Fritz's fire for only twenty minutes and climbing a mountain of rat-eaten *macabés*!† Surely every hire is not worth its labour!

On the 20th of November in rain and slushing mud I depart for Gizaucourt from the "*Villa Potsdam*" for the last time. I am appointed to the machine-gun company—the 2nd *Mitrailleuse* of the 78th Brigade. This is composed of volunteers from the 156th and 160th Infantry; and, strangely enough, the four surviving members of the original Ypres company of 258 men—all that is left of our valiant 8th in its true and unalloyed form—are included in its roster! There is myself, Meroit, the *Gascon*, who uses snuffing tobacco, Perclun and a *caporal*.

We face each other over a reminiscence.

"Let us see who will be the last to go," says the *caporal*.

"It will be the Americain," says Perclun, quietly.

"If I am the last there will be nobody to see me," I complain.

Meroit takes a pinch of snuff.

"Ah, that is bad. Nobody to see him. How do we know he is the last if we cannot see him? No, my *copains*, somebody has to watch François."

"Then," says the *caporal*, "somebody has to watch the man who is watching him!"

\*Bayonets.

†Dead Men.

"True."

"And a fourth man, him!"

"Oui!"

"We better all live!" we shout, going off into peals of hilarity and shaking hands all around.

The mitrailleuse company has, besides us, 121 men, divided into four sections of two machines each. Now in this way each rapid-firer is operated by a *pourvoyeur*, who supplies the ammunition, a *chargeur*, who loads it into the gun, and a *tireur*, who pulls the trigger, and a reserve crew is ever in the background. A *caporal* is in charge of each outfit, a sergeant each two, a lieutenant commands the sections, and the captain oversees all. Eight *echelons*,\* mule-drawn, carry the guns, and eight the munitions, and four *caissons*† the reserve ammunition and *sacs* of the men. The mitrailleuses are the model "St. Etienne—1907," fed by metallic bands containing each twenty-five *cartouches*,‡ and gas-cooled.

At this same period the Teutons are using Maxim Rapid-Firers, water-cooled, and fed by cloth bands of metallic clips containing each 250 shots.

We form in Voilement, two miles removed from Gizaucourt, and here we line up for *permissions*. Mine, however, comes only two nights later, when, in the midst of a sound sleep, the sergeant-major brings me to my feet.

"Come, Americain, there is no time to lose! Get your train!"

"*Pourquoi?*" I am dazed.

"*Permission.*"

"Ou—la—la!" I jump and spring like a boy. I race away for the train. Dirty and unkempt like any tramp, from Valmy to Chalons-sur-Marne, and to Paris, seems like a dream. I am on my way to peace—civilisation—happiness! What if it be but seven days of sanity? What if I am stubble-bearded? Sour-uniformed—toto-ridden? Am

\*Small wagons.

†Large wagons.

‡Cartridges.

I not free—and away from war—and my own "boss"?

I sweep into Paris like a conquering master—and how that seven days passes over, I have no recollection! It is one great orgy of forgetfulness. Not wine—not women—God no! Not one would have cast on me an eye—but pity, for the rank, dank, brutish thing I have become. But obliteration of shelling and shell-horrors, mangled corpses, rat-eaten dugouts and slimy *boyaux*—all those innumerable things that go to make up the most glorious war of history!—this I have undertaken and I endeavour to forget, forget—always to forget! And then—just on the borderland of absolute forgetfulness, strolling down the *Avenue de l'Opera*, I come face to face with a man without a jaw! Jandray!

And he recognises me and brings me back and loads me down with queries about war—always and always the same—about war; and I answer him in a distracted sort of way; and he invites me to a picture. Then we sit and we see—all about war, and I go out and we talk war, sitting in a café. Then he laughs at me—the best way he can without a jaw!—and he mouths: "When do you go back?" And I say "*Demain*."\* And he says: "Too bad, Americain, you will be killed!" And I bid good-bye to "La-Terreur," and now I am back at the front—that is to say, Voilemont, looking for my company, and seeing instead an emplacement of artillery and the busy batteries lying idle and still, breathing perhaps just a little.

I sleep in a hay-stack like a boy—and break bread with the *artilleurs*. They point me out Gizaucourt, where the 2nd Mitrailieuse, 78th Brigade, is in quarter, and thither I go.

We depart for the trenches. No *frichti*,† no rifle, no blanket for me—I am too late for all that; so as I am, I go, and with small life or spirit.

"What makes you so sad, Americain?" says a cheerful fellow named Constant. He was a barber by trade in Paris. "Why don't you laugh?"

\*To-morrow.

†Food.

*L-a-u-g-h!*

"I am sad, Constant, because—well, because I am not merry. There is a saying in America that the earlier the bird, the more worms are after him! And I am afraid we are going to be left!"

"I see," he says, but he does not see at all, and it is night-fall before we reach the *Borne Seize*. By this time we are great friends, though he doubts my sanity at times.

"He is a peculiar—this American," I hear him confide to Meroit, the snuff-taker.

"He bears a charmed life," says the other.

Thus I am established. Now the Gods-of-War are supposed to unbend for us at every opportunity. The way grows lighter as the packs grow heavier. Every one is laughing at the *Borne*. We unload the *echelons*;<sup>\*</sup> we shoulder the mitrailleuses, one gun to three men and the balance packing ammunition. A heavy, poisonous odour attacks our nostrils at the reserve line. It comes in over the left and the *2nd Bataillon de Chasseurs* we are relieving say it is from a gas attack on the 156th.

"*Dieu!* I hope it is not that!" mutters Pierre Raas. He is always concerned about his brother, who is as frightfully concerned about him.

I assure him: "He is quite safe in the '*Villa Potsdam*.' It is amazingly well-built."

"Yes; but this gas—you can never tell."

"See here, I saw your mother in *Sus St. Leger*."

"You don't say! How is that?"

So I have to recount the whole story again. We become good friends. I have more *copains* here than in any other company. Perhaps it will be gay! Who can tell; especially if we are moved. There is a rumour so. I light a *seche*. Ah! That will be fine—to see some other soil. In the *guitoune* is a snug, warm blanket and a *sac*.

"This is luck! Who has passed these things to me?"

Constant laughs and shrugs, "Perhaps it is the early bird you came after!" Now this is pretty sly. We wrap up,

<sup>\*</sup>Small wagons.

draw off our shoes and sleep in earnest. The home-fires burn right ruddy; our wives bring in the usual steaming dishes—Constant is married too!—and the children play around. Then we wake to a trembling dawn and the Germans are shelling. The long boom—boom! and the high ca-thunk! rattle the rafters in the *abri*. Where are our shoes? This is a new one—shoes disappearing in the night. The rats are playing *ecarté* in the *boyau*. Is it possible—they could——

Over the *parapet*, four metres back, where *marmites* fall and *arrivées*\* shriek like drunken libertines, I recognise my footgear! But to get it I am obliged to wait until night when a let-up in the shelling procures a release.

The 88 Austrian cannons are the he-devils! They let loose in the afternoon and a number of fatalities result. They are as accurate as the Germans are faulty. They keep the range where Krupp deviates and blaze after the manner of our own 75s.

We are relieved on the 23rd of December. Passing through a heavy rain, both of shrapnel and water, and in bitter cold, barrage-fire breaks viciously in the *boyau* and we flatten to catch our breath. Fatal to move either way! Meroit, the snuff-taker, goes out here. He is wounded in the hip. We drag him to a *quitoune*, half-demolished and stinking badly.

"Oh—oh, I suffer! What a misery—misery!"

The marmites rattle outside an anvil's chorus. Inside is the remnant of—yes, of what once was a man—a German. He is devoured by rats. His head, arms, legs, part of the torso and neck expose the skeleton. Ravage, disfigurement, diablerie! We shrink from the disgusting spectacle. Still remains a very fair sample of uniform of Teuton green-grey, filth-streaked, and the distinguishment of an officer.

"*Hauptmann*," says Constant,—“the same rank as our *capitaine*. Is that a death?” He stabs at the rats as they slobber, but gives up in repugnance—nausea.

Night falls before we are altogether out of the *boyau* and

\*Also German shells.

at the *Borne Seize*. The conductors of the *echelon* here have unanimous news.

"We are going to leave the Champagne—for good!"

"Huzzah!"

"Hurrah!"

You would think we are going to a ball! We start off for Hans. The deepest, fullest gloom surrounds us—it is the hour before dawn and all the eerie huskiness of night seems to be concentrated in this one gaunt hour. Our cantonment is a barn with rotten straw and the usual lack of ventilation, unless we leave the door open, when a wild, bluing wind blows in.

The auto-busses pass us on from Hans to Outre Ponts in the real Champagne. This village is not large but it is hospitable. Swept by wine-breezes and ensconced in wine-surroundry, there is no end to the rich vintage. The weather lightens. A peasant of eighty-two years lodges four of us. He chatters like thirty. He says: "*Mes enfants*, it is the feast *de Noël*."\* He brings in several bottles of the ordinary Champagne—white and still, but with an exquisite flavour and pale golden streaks like an oriole when the sun shines through. The opalescent liquid flows into our glasses and from there down our throats.

"There is something—*hé?* Old stuff! *Diable*, the *boches* took my best!" The old man mourns meditatively, "It was a rich harvest, I tell you."

"How is it the village stands?"

"Why not?—you think they should burn it too! Now, *sacre nom d'un nom*, that would be too much! They stole three hundred of my bottles—blankets, pillows, silverware—one whole chest, my mattresses! Dirty desperadoes!—but burn the village, why? I am a poor man. We gave them everything—they took the rest!"

This denunciation, delivered in the rapidest flow of language, sends us off into peals of laughter.

"That is it—you laugh! Well, come, drink up! Rather you drink it as the *boches*."

\*Christmas Eve.

We laugh again and drink.

"Take it all—take it all! When those dirty beggars come back it is all up anyhow!"

"When they come back? What do you think," Constant shouts, "that we cannot hold them?"

"*Certainement*. But in the next war——"

"Cristi! He is thinking already of the next war!"

The old fellow chuckles, showing his yellow teeth,

"Why sure. I have already lived through two. They want to shoot me, those Prussians, that time and this. But, what's the use? I am always saved for another. A good thing—who supplies the wine when I am gone—*hé?*" He winks. "They know it too!"

We make Vitry-le-François in the Marne on the morning of the 27th. Not much damage here—only a few blown houses, souvenir of that early invasion. Cattle-trains precede us as far as Vezelises, and now we are in the Vosges. Hammeville is a small township not many kilometres farther off. Here we ensconce for the bright New Year.

January passes over in a blithe and care-free manner. The Army Corps is spruced up, rested, regenerated, made into a new, fresh unit of fighting men with irrepressible spirits. The 2nd Mitrailleuse is sent over to Charmes, also in the Vosges, and eventually lodged in a brewery there. We have only one other soldiery in town—a battalion of the 9th Zouaves. Thus it comes we are popular in Charmes, and especially among the fair inhabitants of the five thousand population. We are heartily welcomed. Breweries, cotton-mills and glass-factories blow a blatant salute. Every *poilu* has his *môme*.\* Never did Pashas have a more regal time! The banks of the Moselle are lined with energetically-protesting swains and young damsels all promising the most extravagant oaths and not one in a position to fill them.

We forget all about the war. A theatre is established with *poilu*-actors and a few village-Bernhardts. Perclun, a former flutist in the *Variété*, takes over the musical programme. A concert is given, and, following this, a pro-

\*Lady-love.

duction of "*Sinbad, le Matelot*."\* We act up the rôles with the greatest fervor, and never was a *claque* more demonstrative than here.

"Who is that *poule*?"† I ask Perclun, referring to a beauty on the *caporal's* arm.

"*Tres épatante, n'est-ce pas*?‡ She is the daughter of the mayor."

"How! Why does she not get an officer?"

He shrugs,

"It is the preference, I suppose. They like a *poilu* better."

Now, that is strange. Our two officers are standing before a shop-window.

"See—you will see now—what I told you is true." Perclun points over to a group approaching. They are the *caporal*, the mayor's daughter, and two other misses of variable ages. They are all chattering in the most non-chalant manner. "I bet you we could get the two of them, and that is a sure thing!"

They pass the officers by in dead silence, the *caporal* blushing a trifle and trying to look unconcerned. Both lieutenants follow the quartette with eager eyes.

"Now, there is a sample. Come around here before the others, and I wager you——"

His voice trails off as he darts post-haste about a corner, heading off the group.

"*Eh bien, mademoiselle*, will you walk with me?"

She giggles, blushes, laughs outright, and puts her arm through his.

"You are a forward fellow."

"Not so forward as to pass you by!"

They are on good terms already.

"It is the leader of the orchestra," say the two others in chorus. The *caporal* assures them he is a good friend and accommodately introduces me also. We pair off in threes,

\*Sinbad, the Sailor.

†Chicken—girl.

‡Very pretty, is she not?

and then that "Hell's pigeon" Perclun deliberately leads us past the officers again.

"Let them have a good look. I don't grudge it!" he says airily. "They have a lonesome life!" And right there and then I vow never to become an officer at any cost! Rather the "*poules*" than the "*sardines*," because "*sardines*" naturally lead to a commission sooner or later. I pity the *caporal*!

We bid farewell to our charming hostesses at the door of the executive mansion, promising to call for them "*pour la representation*."\* But there is no "*representation*." Like a thunder-clap comes the blow—we are ordered out of Charmes for an unknown destination! We close up the theatre, send out patrols to round up the stragglers, pack our wagons, and are off on the 21st of February. Most of the inhabitants of the town are on hand. Oh, how the tears are shed! What vows for an interchange of correspondence! What *pinard*—what kisses! It is heart-wrenching to see those fair young creatures cry. The *voitures a bestiaux*† rock and smoke out of the station—handkerchiefs flutter . . . Charmes becomes a blot and then a memory.

\*Theatre.

†Cattle-wagons, i.e., railroad-cars.

## VI

### VERDUN

LOW clouds hang in a pallid, frigid sky.  
"Where do we go?" says Perclun.  
"Belgium!"  
"Argonne!"

"Back to the Champagne!"

Everybody hazards a guess.

"One thing sure—we go to '*La Villette*'!" the *caporal* cries. He refers to the front, which is christened with the appellation of the slaughter-house district of Paris. To this we all agree. We put in at Revigny in the Department of the Meuse on the 22nd of February, 1916, the whole countryside glistening with snow and an icy wind cutting our lips into tortures. The terrain is hilly. The day breaking. In steaming files the mules demount from the cars and start toward Loupy-le-Château. The going is very bad. Slipping and sliding in the flaked roadway, it is a miracle we keep them on their feet. By eight o'clock we arrive, but the lodgings are not ready.

"Americain, why do you stay out there in the wet? Come in here!" The *caporal* has already found a demolished church to shelter us, and I ask him if I shall bring the mules in also. "*Certainement!* There is no one here to stop it!"

But the leader balks at the door.

"*Espece d'abruti*, get in there!" Constant hollers, slapping him on the loins. The only answer is a generous kick. The whole *echelon* is on the verge of stampede.

"*Hola!* What do you think—he can make his devotions? *Sacre bleu!* It is a horse, not a man, you are leading!" the conductors shout. But Constant replies,

"It is an ass, not a horse, my friends, make no mistake!"

With that we go inside. But within an hour the lodging is established on a farm not many kilometres from Brabant le Roi. A buxom country-woman bids us welcome.

"You are too late, *soldat*, for a good sight," she says to the *caporal*, her eyes squinting. "A Zeppelin came in the night and they shot him down over Brabant. Was there a bombing and a booming! My head rocks like a boat. Well, it is done now, but the *ferme* \* one kilo over is in flames."

We try to see the monster, but orders at the cantonment are decidedly strict—no man allowed out of camp! Shortly we move to Evres sur Meuse. Cannons roar deep-throatedly in the distance. Tangy smoke blows over from the lines. We are close to the front.

"Verdun!" the inhabitants all say,—“you are going to save Verdun!”

We rest toward evening, but at 22.00 o'clock comes the call:

*"Tout le monde debout!"†*

The 2nd Mitrailleur is on its feet, packs packed, mules hitched. We start on the road from Evres. Shivering blasts of wet wind sweep the snow in our faces. Leaden is the aspect—clammy cold our clothing, flesh and bones. The damp crawls down the collar—invades the shoes. The mercury is falling—falling!

"This promises to be a bad march," Constant murmurs gloomily. Most of the men are too cold to talk. They shudder down into their *capotes*,‡ breathing heavily and expelling the vapor in long steaming jets from their nostrils. The mules strain with the loads. They slide and fall, so the conductors lash them up and curse like fiends,

*"Hola! Hola! Come on, espee d'andouille!"*

A scramble of hoofs—scream—whinny . . . the *caisson* moves on once more. Daybreak discovers us ploughing

\*Farm.

†Everybody up.

‡Coats.

through a forest. Thick branches obstruct the view, their bare, gaunt sides hanging with icicles and bending beneath the burden of snow and alternate wind. Through that desolate, overhanging, sentinelled brood we pursue the path, widening out and assuming the proportions of a highway. Jetties of wind throw in our faces. Frozen particles nip at our fingers. Trudge—tramp—tramp! Slow filters the dawn. Dusky—hazy—waxen—settling, then, into a dank, omnipresent gloom. Voices speak ahead of us—small child-prattle intermixed with soothing tones of a woman. A moaning, heart-breaking cry comes out of the aspect.

What group of melancholy omitted from the *Louvre* is this?

A caravan of isolated rustics, country-folk of the poorest classes in their holiday habiliments, approaches. The mother bears up her child—a mere babe in the arms. It sobs and chatters with the cold. So does she. She makes futile and pathetic attempts to warm it—to encourage the weeping great boy at her skirts; the small, insignificant girl-child at her right. Behind is a cart, piled high with miscellaneous possessions, evidently garnered in haste, drawn by an emaciated cow. She tracks in the heel-marks of a limping peasant, stoic in the face of so much misery and bearing up without a quiver to his face.

"*Hola!* What is this—you cry?" The conductor of our *echelon* draws up his mule.

"Ooooh!" the sobbing great boy sinks down on his knees.

"Shame—get up!" mumbles the father. "*Verdun est perdu,*" he says emphatically,—“the Prussians are coming there now.”

"What do you say?—Verdun is lost!"

"*Oui! Oui!*" shivers the woman, "It is terrible—the *boches* are in!"

Our captain steps to the fore,

"Of a truth, it is not as bad as that?"

"Oh, yes, *m'sieu'*—they are over everything. The bombardment is a fright; useless to go farther—quite useless."

We whip up our *echelon* and proceed. The peasants stare after us, muttering on their way. Long caravans come after them—women and babes mostly, ploughing through the snow, illy resisting—poorly nurtured, whimpering, often with the nurslings at their breasts. Seam-faced, white-haired superannuated villagers, murmuring imprecations, hustle after. Oxen come, slowly steaming up the highway, drawing carts and whole families perched up high like a wedding party in old Normandy, but always frightened—sad. A man of eighty leads his staggering spouse, heavy-shawled. They lean on each other. They are frail, they are wan, but the invincible spirit still burns within their hearts.

"Oh, *m'ssieu's*," croaks the old dame, "can you flay those desperadoes? For four days they shell us. Everything is flames!"

"Verdun burns?"

"*Oui*," a small boy chirps up: "If you stop them you are heroes, my father says!"

"Here, shavey-head, you want a piece of chocolate?"

He nips it from my hand, trudging on, bundle at shoulder. A shy mouse of a girl approaches. She wants some too. Her tear-stained face shows grimy-white in the sombre air. Blue lips frame a "*merci*."\* We feed many of them. Our own rations are slender—amounting to *suplement*,† that is all. And always it is the same story:

"Verdun is burning—the lines are lost—the Germans pour in over the ridges!"

"*Dépêchez-vous, mes enfants*," ‡ prays the captain nervously. The situation seems to be bad indeed. But we can trudge only so fast—after that, it is drifts, and stumbling in and delay in getting out—and icy chill eating farther into the marrow—and more pathos in the roadway. Ever the same wan voices:

\*Thank you.

†Sweet-meats.

‡Hurry, children.

"All is lost! *Verdun est perdu!*"\*

Perambulators then cut small traces in the snow. Infants wail and cry, and there are some who are unconscious from cold and they sit slumped over.

"*Maman!*" Frantic hands grope out for stiffening skirts.

"*Sus—sus! Maman is with you—courage, petit.*"

"I am cold."

"Courage. You will be warm."

A sweeping blast churns up clouds of white, whirling flakes. Children scream and stagger!

"Oooh!"

"*Maman!*"

Long wails break the icy walls of trees into resounding-boards and echo through the woods. I empty my *musette* of all it has in food, which is meagre. The refugees continue away from the devastated region. Nearer we grow toward the lines. Reverberations burst through at intervals, causing more pallid faces and fearsome looks.

Boom—boom!

A narrow-chested, consumptive youth, leading a horse by the bridle, comes up to us. He stares wide-mouthed,

"Why, they are all coming back!"

"What do you mean?"

"The soldiers—behind us. They are leaving. Are you going in?"

"To Verdun."

He shouts to make himself heard: "*The commandant ordered all out. Everything is over. Verdun est—*" His voice whirls away on the wind.

Like an exodus, the procession bunches up, ever-increasing. The first platoon of soldiery is the aviation corps—the planes on huge lorries rumbling through the drifts. They are going. We are coming. The staff officers pass from Verdun—also *artilleurs* on horseback but without any field-pieces.

"Ho! Where are your cannons?"

"Back there! Ask Fritz!"

\*Verdun is lost!

"You lost them?"

"He took them! *Sacre!*—the bombardment is the worst ever. All the villages are flat—nothing stands. Verdun is burning. You have no chance. Stay here."

"Impossible!"

"Well, all right, but you are crazy! It is all over—the *boches* are in."

"We kick them out!"

"Good luck to you, *andouilles!*"\*

They pass off, laughing; we, grimly sticking to our task.

"A little faster, *mes braves*—just a little," urges our captain. We quicken our pace.

"You cannot save it. *C'est perdu!*"† sings out a passing officer. Behind him comes a straggling lot of soldiers. They are without *sacs* and some without rifles; wild of eye, panic-stricken, smoke-blackened. The snow marks furrows down their cheeks. Tramp—tramp! Tramp—tramp!

I say to one: "What is there? Are the lines down?"

He shakes his head, motioning he cannot hear. The cannonading has deafened him.

We pass along.

Boom! Thudd—boom!

Put—put—put—put!

The steady throb of a cycle breaks in, thundering up. The rider slips to the snow—bellows an order. We change direction, staggering from the forest out into open fields swimming with frozen ponds and bogs. Through the sheaves of flakes falling with monotonous regularity are glimpses of the high road. Auto-busses churn toward Verdun, hustling our regiments to the front—racing—panting—fighting against time and the Crown Prince's Army. Whole divisions go catapulting onward with the speed of ten devils, throwing up sprays of snow in cloud-heavens! The 20th Army Corps to the rescue—that is it! We are fighting forward to save Verdun—stronghold of the East.

"Save Verdun! Save Verdun!" becomes the cry.

\*Fools.

†It is lost.

We labour afoot, our helmets and shoulders white like sheeted goblins, biting through the storm. A spectre-house looms up in broken chaos. Out of the storm, into this shelter— The temptation is great. . . .

“On to Verdun!”

We struggle instead, passing up shelter—with one resolve and one purpose. By eleven o'clock the outlines of Nixeville, the first of the ruined villages, wavers in the distance. The strain is enormous. Can we reach it? Legs are failing—breaths beating—*godasses*\* frozen to the feet. It is superhuman—that last kilo, but it must be done. Staggering like drunken men, then, we fall into the cantonment, tears rushing down our purple cheeks!

But not much respite is given a weary host here. The 2nd Mitrailieuse storms the kitchen—is given soup in small portions; beats out the cold before a shallow fire; rests, and starts again afoot for the *Fort de la Chaume*.

The most enormous debacle is in motion! Whole streams of troops take their way to the rear. In the white blanket ghost-legions are flying—flying—flying before the Germans! Can we stem this? Is the Iron Division to be placed before such odds—the Crown Prince's Army, to re-succour—redeem the cowardice of its confrères? It does not seem possible that we can do it alone. But for what has the Iron Division been organised if not to bear the brunt—to form the battering-ram—shock troops, to stave off defeat in the face of odds? The company goes forward to the slaughter without a question. Not one but has a secret scruple about what we shall find. What morbid discovery? Insane retreat? Every jaw is set and rifle shouldered grimly on that advance to Verdun, fully sensible as we are of an approaching holocaust. It is unavoidable!

Aviation contingents continue to plough toward the back. The “sausages,”† packed into automobiles, hastily are driven to the rear. Artillery horses and riders, *camions* of every description, labour in the drifts with churning wheels, and

\*Shoes.

†Balloons.

all turned—in the wrong direction! This is the most disheartening sight of all—*poilus* running from the foemen!

The road chokes now with autos stuck fast in the snow. One has stalled and this halts the entire convoy. Fetid mud and snow-water fill the fields on either side.

"It cannot be helped—strike across the meadows, *mes enfants*," orders our commanding officer. "We cannot delay."

We go into the bogs knee-deep. Slashing around, stumbling and falling, the company proceeds. *Echelons* commence to pour back of the other mitrailleuse units. This is too much!

"Cowards! *Poltrons*! Go back! What do you mean by retreating? Shame!" We scream at them in demoniac rage, but they only look on us as crazy. More artillery. Is the whole army retiring? Is indeed everything lost? The blood boils!

A quiet-voiced officer of a machine-gun company speaks to our captain:

"It is no use for you to go up there. The *boches* have everything."

"Now, see here," replies our own determined officer. "I have heard enough! If the whole world retreats, we still go on—*vous savez?*"

A cheer breaks out among the company. We press forward with renewed energy and resolution. At sixteen o'clock we advance to the *Fort de la Chaume*. By this time the batteries are breaking closely from the Teuton lines and thundering over the terrain. The blizzard ceases, but, bitterly cold, our sufferings seem to intensify. There is no respite in here—we simply receive word to proceed with all speed to Verdun.

The *commandant* of the Fort says: "On the road between Verdun and Bras you will get your orders. In all probability that means taking the lines to-night with your men."

The captain protests: "How far is that?"

"Twenty-five kilometres."

*"Nom de Dieu!* We are on the road since one o'clock. My men have no reserve food and have had scarcely anything. How can we do it?"

He takes up his weary position at the head of our columns. We stagger forth into the chill-laden air. The tramp continues. It grows monotonous. Ever the same retreat—the same bombardment—the same snow-blended terrain. Not a word passes lip for an hour in the company. At the end of that time we hail Verdun—the city, that is, embedded in a valley of hills and split by the River Meuse from end to end. It rains shrapnel now. The valley we traverse vibrates with shrieking shells, ploughing into the city—exploding sodden dwellings with crashing detonations. The *genie* \* mines the bridge over the Meuse as we cross it. It is to be set off in emergency to stem the Teuton tide.

"Bad business," muses Constant. "What kind of a hole are they pushing us into? If the bridge is blown before we reach it——"

Perclun snorts: "You are so smart—we are not going to reach it!"

"Brava!" says the lieutenant, patting him on the back. "That is right. So you should talk! *On les aura—les boches!*"†

Night brings us onto the road from Verdun to Bras and Fleury. Wounded men are hobbling in from the *Poste de Secours*. Ambulances pass and repass, laden with their grim charges. A jargon of broken metal and ammunition lines the roadside. Artillery-*caissons*, over-turned, are reeking with the blood of horses, mules, conductors. Bodies fester in the snow-patches. Wagons spread their invaluable cargoes abroad on the highway. Bread, rice, coffee, tall stacks of sugar, no less white than the surroundings, groceries and provisions—enough to succour a division!—heap up in disconsolate array over the whole vista. Motor-lorries are split into fragments; meat-carts are kindling, the red blood of exploded carcasses tinting the snow-path a bright

\*Engineer corps.

†We get them—the boches.

crimson hue. Thousands of pounds of meat are thus integrating, mingling with the wrecks of men and beasts who drew them. Snow and dirt and dung are in places so commingled and block up the passage to such an extent—we are forced to "march by one," stepping over and through them. The odor, as is usual, is nauseating.

Here we are, then, again, tramping bitter places on earth, among lame, halt and blind, wrecks and wreckage, human jetsom eddied hither and yon.

We are warned to hurry forward. No time to lose now, no moment! in consideration of the task before us. Nothing but haste—haste—haste! Retreating troops in squads of fifteen or twenty crowd past us minus rifles or equipment. These despondents have the most woebegone countenances and a haggard, sullen, exhausted, pitiful look. Their clothing is soaked—as is ours; only they have the dash of crimson common to all front-line men, and mud and filth of the trenches embroidered in.

The heaviest reverberations jar the earth. Great spouts of flame mark the salutations from our 240s still pounding away at the rear. They are camouflaged in woods. Alone these monsters are standing off the foe, and awaiting our reinforcement to ease up. *Marmites* sing overhead from the Teuton lines. The straggling French legions, retiring in bad order, flinch and jerk their bodies this way and that from shell-shock and nervousness.

"My God, they must have been through a siege," my *copain* mutters. "See how they are affected."

"Yes, and that one—he is as dazed as if he milked the cows at home."

Our captain halts such a squad.

"What's the reason you go back?" he enquires sharply.

"Everybody is going, *mon capitaine*. It is useless. The *boches* will be in before midnight."

"Cristi! Is that the way they do! Well——" he shuts his teeth with a snap, and we go on.

Heavy artillery comes lumbering toward us now. The last of the defenders except the valiant 240s are giving up

in despair. What a shelling it must have been! What fiendish offensive work launched by the Crown Prince!

Verdun! A surge of fire sweeps through me—we must fly—we must advance on the double-quick to defend Verdun! My pace perceptibly increases. I am surprised they do not all hurry up—the rest of the 2nd Mitraillease, but we are halted in a field, ignominiously—fatally, it seems to me!—to wait for orders. How long will this be? Must Verdun fall while we hesitate, inactive, motionless—while the enemy sweeps in? *Diable! Diable! Mille diables!*

The field is piled high with munitions.

Perclun observes this. "If they fire right, we will get a blowing, Americain, that will save us the trouble of going up to the trenches," he says, cheerfully. The sauce-pans come frightfully close.

Fortunately the blizzard recommences at this stage and the flakes come down again lustily.

"Good! Blanket the scene and we get no visitors from above!" This observation is directed toward hostile aircraft. Night also closes in while we shiver and shudder beneath, and an inky blackness envelops us. Not a mouthful of food is in the *musette*; not a spark of courage or nerve-energy remains. The zealotry stamped out of all—myself included—by this disastrous delay, we sink down, one by one, in miserable, frozen attitudes on the snow. Sleep, sleep and oblivion, sleep and oblivion, sleep—and—oblivion——

*"Tout le monde debout!"\**

The old order—crashing in—gets us all on our feet! We are stiff—like tent-pickets, aching and cold—oh, so frigid! No longer can the teeth be controlled, or the limbs or the senses. We sway like dizzy things, drunken with cold.

*"Eh bien, Americain—are you there? Swallow this."*

Constant puts his flask of *alcool de menthe* into my hands. I take a swallow—something burns my throat like red-hot coals! It revivifies while it stifles—rushes the blood through the veins, churning up life—energy—action.

\*Everybody up!

"Aaah!"

"You feel better, do you? Well, come this way." My *copain* draws me after him, stumbling over corpses, into shell-holes, and bumping mules and *caissons*.

"Holy Mother! What did you put in the alcohol, Constant?"

"It burns your palate? Then——" He rolls a snow-ball and hands it to me,—*"nibble this."*

I make a wry face but eat it, and the burning sensation recedes. With a few more mouthfuls I will be all right.

*"Sa, eat all you want, it is free—gratis!"*

We laugh, and the company gets to the *Fortin de Froide Terre* by one A. M. Two officers of the artillery and seven men are alone here in the garrison. Our captain addresses one:

"Possible to get a little food for the men?"

"Not a *soupeon*.\* We are out completely."

"What a misery! My company has been on the road twenty-four hours and with scarce a mouthful."

We go on. Our orders are to repair to the lines. Now at last, it is apparent—without food or water, in a fainting condition from fatigue and over-exertion, we are expected to succour the lines! *Bon Dieu*, have mercy on us—this will be a task! The Iron Division moves up with its pulses failing.

We cross the shell-pocked meadow—struggle on with beasts and packs, swaying, wallowing. A hundred slugs are whistling overhead—*arrivées*† bursting. The snow-field spouts in geysers, cataclysmic and fatal. With each crash a fresh shudder blooms among the men. Our nerves are going. The eerie night, so forlorn, so famished—so morbid in its hopeless, fearful fight, grips us in our very vitals, quaking and quailing the flesh.

A shriek bursts across the wild maelstrom! It resounds, clutching hearts and tingling spines.

One of the conductors has gone out—blown into frag-

\*Suspicion.

†German shells.

ments! His *voiturette* is standing, but without either mule or driver. They have been wiped clean—though not clean! Somewhere in that ghastly meadow remains are lurking—descended in some sour swamp—foul morass—for crows and vultures!

We denude the wagon of its contents—pack these off by arm-loads into the *ravin*, where all the *caissons* are unloaded, to return to *Froide Terre* to await us—or, at least, the returning contingent—at that point. We shoulder the machines, the munitions, a guide precedes, and the 2nd Mitrailleuse plunges ahead in an effort to stem the German tide—to resurrect Verdun!

*Boyaux* are there none! Long before have these crashed under in the fearful cannonade. A broken, bewildering mêlée succeeds, swimming with snow-water, putrid mud, bodies of victims and slimy, sticky depths. Steel bits and bars and remnants of hordes of fighting units are jangled; dugouts levelled; trenches reduced to choppy stone-quarries. Disaster is here complete and overwhelming! The snow has ceased, and we trudge down into the valley. It is "*La Vallée de la Mort*."\* A whole battalion has been swept out here by barrage-fire, plying its demoniac trade over men, horses, mules, wagons and *caissons*, crumbling steel and stone, blasting blood and bone. The whole swamp is sodden, grisly with relics—savage with brute-lust. Carnivorous worms and weasels, mousey and gloating, glide through the ruins.

We cross also that field of horror. We advance to what formerly were trenches, dug-outs and strongholds. The trenches are shell-holes; the dug-outs are shell-pits; the strongholds are—well, shell-holes, too! There is neither semblance nor souvenir of order—no lines—no *parapets*; everything levelled out that was high, thrown up that was low, mangled, distorted, dishevelled. We plant the machine-guns as firmly as possible in those shell-craters, choosing the deepest and best-protected, but being in reality only make-shifts of the flimsiest order.

\*Death Valley.

It is three o'clock now and we have been constantly on the march since one of the previous morning. That is twenty-seven hours! Cristi!—twenty-seven hours afoot in blinding storm and raging blizzard with scarce food or rest or cessation to gain a position from which to counter Fritz.

### *The Battle of Douaumont-Hautremont*

Patrols sent out by the captain report the 156th ensconced on our left on the *Côte du Poivre*; the 160th in the region around Douaumont on the other hand; so again we are directly between and in a position to bear the severest fighting brunt.

Not a vestige of resistance would have greeted the Crown Prince had he walked in an hour before! Right there and then he lost Verdun. Right there and then were the *boches* cheated of as fine a victory as could be imagined upon the Western Front. It is clear as dew and sparkling as any mid-winter morning that all this great bombardment, this fiendish preparation, this calculation, concentration, extermination of the *poilu*, shall go for nothing in the face of that one gaunt—but gigantic!—hour, from two to three on a February morning of 1916! What was the reason for the delay that cost so dear? Why was it the enemy failed to invest Verdun with the French forces in debacle?—to enter "with the rifle on the shoulder," as it were? History alone—from the *boche* standpoint—can account for this. Suffice it, the hour is past, the receding chin of the Hohenzollern Heir played too great a part—and the failure at Verdun can since be ranked with Waterloo, with the shoe on the other foot!

Germany failed to make good!

Whether in fear of mines—in fear of a trap—of a stratagem—

Germany failed to make good!

Without a single *poilu* left to guard what was once a

works—without a single works left to guard what was once an army—

Germany failed to make good!

Miette, our lieutenant, and formerly infantryman from Arras, sets his jaw squarely, feet firmly planted wide apart behind a mitrailleuse.

"They will continue to fail, *mes braves*, if you will remember the words from *Froide Terre*": he enunciates clearly,

"Until the last man—not an inch!"

We repeat: "Not an inch!" meaning it as grimly.

He refers to the captain's instructions to the company on leaving for the lines: "Do not take the offensive, but remain to the last man with or without mitrailleuse—with or without success! I expect from the Iron Division, iron resistance!"

"It will be a tough time, Americain," the lieutenant assures me,—"*Numeroter les abatis!*"\* I do not think either one of us comes out of this furnace alive!"

The water stands about our waists. Its icy embrace curls any scruples we have about the character of work undertaken. Before, is an enemy determined to the point of frenzy, hesitant only in order to summon up greater strength for greater fury. Our bleak vigil is, therefore, prelusory of death. No power should stop our rabid tongues from speaking—pouring forth leaden hell before this super-confident foe, as he will be when dawn ushers in. We are wilting, we are fatigued, we are weary to the heart's core, but let once the attack be launched—

Thus it is and the first faint ray awakens—first gleam smiles in Verdun. Fritz jerks up his head—like an angry cobra, strikes out—hisses— We let loose in one titanic outburst! Every machine-gun, every field-piece in the open lands behind, bellows, roars, smashes, crashes, whistles. . . .

\*Number your extremities, i.e., a *poilu* slang way of inferring that much danger is faced; that is, to number the legs and arms so that the parts may be fitted together again after being blown apart.

Line after line comes up in dense formation, mechanical, shoulder-to-shoulder, superb with military exactitude and fortitude; it sweeps on, over the crest, up to our positions—goes down in one scythe-like volley! We rush the machines, feed—feed—feed, everlastingly fire and feed—and the spouting flame goes forth—the grinding death spurs on, spreading like a cancerous growth in the German morale. The casualty is enormous. Warm bullets draw the air after them over our own heads, shells break in the valley behind—among the battery-crews. No single man of the division falters—no protest among the exhausted, emaciated, semi-delirious defenders can be heard. Many go out, but it is a fatal, or near-fatal wound, that is exacted to still them.

A seething torment seems to rattle in the brain! The continuous pfut—pfut—pfut—whrroarr! storms through the head, choking the sensibilities, rendering everything motion without sound—sound without surcease!

The sheep continue to come on—lie in rows, sacklike and stuffed with cotton-clay. No end—the heap grows—raises—two—three feet, before our cannon-mouths, gun-muzzles, pouring out its blood. . . .

Indescribable—the life snuffed out!

Boom—boom!

Whrroarr! Crrackk! Rattle—crrackk!

Boom!

We feed—they fall!

Verdun trembles in the balance, but leaning toward our side. The attack eases up and we have all the best of it.

Before full day a second offensive is launched. These poor, puzzled *boches* cannot understand the resistance. They thought to have crumpled us pretty badly. So it was! But the psychological moment having passed over, alas for them!—the battering-ram is in motion, this French legion from the border—and no power on earth can give them Verdun now!

We—have—them—stopped!

The full import of this is demonstrated this second attempt. Again they hurl upon our straggly, unbusiness-like

formation—again are mowed down and cast like false Buddhas into the dust.

We spare our ammunition with this retirement and leave it to the artillery to ward off any false hopes on the enemy's part. What must the reports be that are spreading over the world?—the giant German offensive unsuccessful before Verdun! The fortified city and its strategical value saved for France? The Nemesis sounding for Teuton arms before the double-quick advance of the 20th Corps?

Long and laborious eulogies will be sung—symposiums graced with the details of that fray—we are only tired men in icy depths of mud and water behind toy-cannons that cool at last as we sink into slumberland!

The day passes over. The night; and the following day; and by not so much as a hair's breadth is our vigilance relaxed. By this time it is a little quieter all along the front, but the artillery still breathes defiance.

Coming over to inspect our machine, the captain tells me Perclun is no more. "Went out with the *caporal* and Pierre Raas yesterday morning," he says quietly. "And that is not all. We have two machines out of order and four boys wounded."

Then I am the only man from our Belgian company remaining! The knowledge leaves me dumb.

"You can do us all a great service, Americain." He lays his hand on my shoulder, looking into my face. "Can you go as far as Verdun? It is a dangerous mission. . . ."

"I am glad to go."

"One chance out of ten you arrive?"

"I am willing to try."

"*Bien!* Find the *Hôpital Militaire*. The *echelon* and kitchen are there. Tell them where we are. At the same time, if you can buy any food, in God's name do it!—or I shall have a company of skeletons on my hands."

He smiles rather wanly.

"I will do my best, and if I am not back—well, then, I am killed and on some other road!"

He gives me money and encouragement. When it is

dark I start. The direction of *Froide Terre* is torn with shell-fire. I pass through "*La Vallée de la Mort*," which reminds me of a festering sore. Bodies hurtle through the air with the force of the explosions, bursting right and left and before and behind, but never correct for me. Re-demolition of that already demolished area is making turmoil out of chaos. Life is instilled suddenly into the most blameless exteriors. Objects rejuvenate, spurred on by a bit of explosive—flung here, jolted there—spun by the force of expanding air high into whirligigs—slashed down with momentous force on the innocent terrain! Spasms pass that shake and tremble everything—a tremor involving tons of dirt and catapulting steel-fragments. Snow is lashed, water sprinkled, corpses disintegrated, helmets bounced hither and thither. . . .

Boom—boom!

The bombardment swells ever higher and more insistent. A peculiar shrill scream pierces the din! I come upon it almost rushing—stagger back! Wild fear clutches, and as suddenly releases, my heart . . . —a mule! It is one of our simple, worthy *echelon* tribe, stuck in a puddle of mud and unable to extricate himself! He makes the night hideous, though, with his whines. I free him, lead him through and out of "*La Vallée*," and clear to *Froide Terre*.

It is two A. M. We lodge together in a stable there. Heavy shelling launches in the day—concentrated action against the fort. The 240s and 380s, the large-calibred German-Berthas, rain their dismal enormous messengers about the environs—into the actual premises of the famous stronghold—Verdun's finest. Not a bolt budges—no rock careens even to the force of the blow. *Froide Terre* resists with all the forces in her—stands up like a general! We quake—we sway like ships over a bar, like crater-tops saluting the blood-red sky of Martinique—but we cast them off as pebbles ricochet from granite!

I am hungry as a wolf. Several *artilleurs* are in as bad a condition. They resolve to go to Verdun. "We must

have food!" is the cry. In a half hour they are back, empty-handed, and with four of their *corvée* missing. I resolve to hold out until nightfall.

"If you go before, it is suicidal. The *boches* are sitting up in 'sausages'\* and can see the whole salient," warns the *commandant*.

I act on his advice. I set forth on the road when evening's shadows have begun to fall, leading my emaciated quadruped, who is about as anxious to expose himself as a ripe snowball before sunlight. The blizzard has commenced to rage again. The night is dark; the road obliterated. I have been fully advised of the direction, but two moments out of the fort obliterates this. I am as astray as a lost cat! Heavy shells crash an interrogation in the solitude. My companion, being supported with less fortitude than his guide, bolts and runs!

Now this is a splendid mess! Slashing mud and water, extreme hunger, some fatigue, onerous duty, omnipresent death, and a crazy mule! The combination threatens to work calamity, but with one accord both master and animal stop! A *fusée éclairante*† buds over the landscape—waving snow-flakes show opalescent, silently shimmering; the white blanket rips, explodes—an immense cataract develops into a furious downpour and we are engulfed!

My *copain* struggles with all the panic at his command to come out of the deluge. He shakes himself—his sides heaving—and rattling the cart at his back like the tail of a snake; then bares his fangs and brays in a raucous falsetto! The sound goes over the prairie like dead souls screaming. I clap hands to ears. . . .

"Yeeee—hawrrr—rr!"

Whrroarr!

This second tumult effectually blankets the first. The fal-lal cuts short. And now, maybe, as time improves, we will move on. But "Nikko"—I have heard that mules sometimes bear this name!—construes otherwise. He

\*Observation balloons.

†Flare-shell.

hastens to differ. He stands. No amount of persuasion or acrimony can budge him from his post. Shrapnel wings in a steady ratio over; rockets blaze. Slender fillets of lace plant one above the other on our crowns and shoulders—and in "Nikko's" case, flanks. He elects to court annihilation—immobile.

The blizzard improves. I roll and light a *seche*.

I say: "*Ecoute*, Nicodemus. Why shall I not go ahead if it is your preference to remain behind? Stay here—eat snowballs—drink *marmites*—make food for the ravens, what is that to me? The *echelon* will do without you. There is a fine one coming from Fritz every minute—you have only to remain a few seconds longer and pouf! it is through. Now, *pied de choux*,\* make a choice!"

I start out, walking briskly, and my comrade tags at the heels as ready and docile as any dog. He follows closely, his hot, sour breath revolting my stomach as he wheezes it past my neck. His whiskers tickle—jar! I have a fleeting reflection that it must be the same to most gentle-bred women when they meet a rough-faced *poilu*! And then the night closes in double-dark.

We are confronted with a slushy creek. "Nikko," in his anxiety to conform with my slightest desires, immediately plunges in. I issue first from the other side, he second, and the cart a bad third. It is uncertain on its wheels. Some time is spent bolstering this up. We continue up a slight incline. At the crest of the hill are voices. A light shines out suddenly. Panic-stricken, my faint-hearted follower attempts a second break, but I have him fast by the forelock.

"Yeeee—hawrrr—rr!"

His resilient voice is the signal for a volley of rifle-shots! I fall flat, abandoning my hold, and consigning mules and their accompanying sirens to the dung-heap; and then, having allowed a sufficient time to elapse, both for my attackers to desist and my mule to default, rise up to find them both in the close vicinage. Three *poilus* are examining "Nikko."

\*Foot of a cabbage.

They bray at him and he brays back, and so the matter stands when I approach their *guitoune*.

"*Hola!* Is that friend or foe?"

"!!——\*!——??!\*——!!——!\*"

"*Sacre!* You are choice with your epithets, my *frangin!*"

"It is Jean Raas!"

"Correct! Well, how is it you are here, Americain?"

"I could ask you the same."

"I am on the *liaison* as you well know."

"And I am on the *mitrailleuse*."

"To be sure. And how is Pierre?"

"He—he——"

"Well? What are you hiding?"

"Nothing. He is all right."

"I—think—you—lie."

"Well, what of it? One does not go into the war expecting to live!"

"Ah, he is dead—*amoché—bouzillé!*\* My brother is dead—do you hear, Durand? I have lost my brother! Oh, misery, misery—he is gone—Pierre. . . ."

He breaks down completely.

The man addressed as Durand addresses me: "What is that you say—his brother is killed? *Sacre nom d'un nom*, you do not mean that?"

"What can one expect?"

"That is terrible!"

"So it is, my good friend—but when you have seen your intimates go—one by one—sometimes three together, as in this case, into the abattoir, pulverised before the cannon's mouth—then you get hardened. Is that not so? I am the last of my company."

"But his brother!"

"I have lost two."

"You don't know how this affects him."

"Oh yes."

"And his mother! She wi——"

"Mine did also!"

\*Wounded—killed.

Silence. Only the sobbing sounds of the stricken young *poilu* mingle with the steady drip-drip of the seeping water around. More distant is the rumble of batteries and occasional crash of shells. "Nikko," forgotten, leans down, sniffing at Jean Raas' bent-over form. This electrifies him! He leaps up.

"Oh, I hate war—I hate war!" he shrieks, waving his arms aloft. "I shall never get over this! The *boches* may live or die, come or go—I——"

The fourth man of our group plucks him at the arm: "Silence, *andouille!* if '*Ceintré des Pannards*'\* hears you, it is all up!"

The sorrowing boy gives him a stupid, rather withering look, drawing deep breath, and takes himself to the *quitoune*.

I turn to Durand: "Which is the way to Verdun?"

"Cross the creek on the level——"

"I have just had one bath in it!"

"Then follow, without crossing, as far as the railroad. Cross that. One hundred metres further you will come on the highway; it is the Verdun-Bras road and leads you straight. But go rapidly there, because it is always under the hammer of the enemy and comes in for steady barrage."

"*Merci*, my *frangin*; and now have you anything to eat?"

"Do you hunger?"

"For two days!"

"In that case here is some *bricheton*.† But only a small piece as we are without *ravitaillement*. Likewise the wine."

He actually has a small measure of brandy, and this gives ungrudgingly to me. I swallow—once only, and with glowing eyes thank him.

We are on our way. "Nikko" needs no encouragement

\*Crooked Legs, nickname of the lieutenant of the 9th Company, who commands the liaison; also, because of his enormous calves that give his legs a misshapen appearance.

†Bread.

now, and strangely enough tracks my steps as faithful as any cur. He muzzles up, in fact, until by the time we are at the railroad, he is pressing me for the lead.

"*Sá*, what is it, old '*Grandes-Oreilles*'?" I say to his long-ears. "That is a brilliant name for you and quite fitting the successor of the predecessor!"—I refer to the late *sous-lieutenant*.—"What is the hurry-up?" I stand and face him, putting the bread into my mouth. But at this he yaps out so lugubrious a wail, I am forced to laugh and choke, and expel the morsel, which he greedily devours from the ground.

"That is a great scheme! Well—here—eat it all if you are that bad. Better you as me—you have to carry me!"

Negotiating the highway, I leap into the cart, grasp the lines, pushing him along at top-speed. We rumble, sway and bounce. A stray shell arrives on our quarter, and "*Nikko*" ends up his dizzy flight with a mad gallop into Verdun! Three o'clock before the *echelon* is located. Now I fodder his "Big-Ears," water him liberally, and relinquish him to his team-mates and brother-mules.

In the building the conductors before a large fire are in a fast Nirvana. The air is heated foul, and my clothing, brittle with icy-damp, drip-drips in a tenuous stream on the floor. The steam rises. I am warm and sleepy . . . my wife is bringing a covered dish of something onto the table—both children race up at once to see what it contains.—"Don't crowd," I say,—"*it is soup.*" "*It is not soup.*" "*What then?*" "*Now you guess.*" "*Well, then, it is ragout de veau.*" "*It is not ragout de veau.*" "*What is it?*" . . .

"*Champignon!*"\* explodes a voice near at hand.

I rise with a peculiar snap in my head and find the hours very much passed over, a group of the conductors lushing coffee at one end of the apartment, all amazed at the sudden triumphant return of the "*Champignon*"—the star-performer of their mulish crew! and—

\*Mushrooms.

"What is that you say?—who is '*Champignon*'?" I advance to their sibilant midst.

"Ah, Americain, it is you!"

"I am a mushroom?"

"*Mon Dieu, non!* I mean it is very pleasant to see you."

"*Merci.*"

"The mule of the first *voiturette*—he is . . . —now, you do not mean to say it was you brought him back?" He appeals to the others: "Well, see here, the Americain brought him back."

"It is a good thing you did so—*tres bien*. France needs him worse—almost so, at least!—as the *poilu*! He—ha—ha! We knew we would not lose him."

"Give me *jus* \* at once," I insist, "or you will lose me, and that is a sure thing. I have not eaten for two days and three nights."

They ply me with food, and ask a detailed account of the whole recovery. They are good fellows—they vote me a "*Croix de Guerre*." After this the sergeant-major advises me to visit a shop in the *faubourg* Pavé to make my purchases for the company.

The street is ringing with tipsy shouts, and a huge battery of dried onions comes volplaning down with the force of *marmites*!

"*Hola!* Come over, Americain, and celebrate the defence of Verdun!"

I plough from under the sweet-smelling fruit and approach the source of the merriment with much trepidation.

"Ah-ha! There is some one in the 20th Army Corps who would pass by red-wine, white-wine or liqueur! For shame, my *copains*, my associate-protectors of the honour of the Lily, that this man lives! Shall he live? Shall we let him live?"

I recognise now the swollen features of Ary Blas, a *caporal* in the 160th. He is prancing up and down the street under a half-open umbrella, which he minces overhead like a *demoiselle* at a fashionable watering-place. His

\*Coffee.

head-dress is the most laughable imaginable. It is grotesquely feminine with a long knight's plume of the twelfth century, clustering ribbon-bows and some waxen blossoms on the brim. Where this could have been garnered is a mystery. He marches with pockets obtruding each the neck of a bottle duly capped; by his side an ugly Zouave, top-hatted and rakishly hilarious.

Members of the same company are beating an Indian Dance on dish-pans with wooden mallets and rendering hideous the blameless French air.

"Shall we let him live?"

They make a concerted rush for me, clattering and banging their instruments. I dive into an open shop and the whole horde after—out the rear entrance and into a *cul-de-sac*. . . .

Ah—ching—ching—whrroarr!

An exploding *marmite*, crashing before the door I have just vacated, slams it in their faces!

*Mon Dieu*—a respite! By manipulating against the sides of the houses I am able to try the back doors of each in turn, but with a uniform result—they are all bolted. The inhabitants have flown. Now it gets uncomfortable; the alley becomes a veritable *boyau*, a death-trap for missiles hurtling over from the front. The horde in the *faubourg Pavé* hesitate before this deluge. They are sobered now. They cluster in the doorway, uncertain how to proceed. I pause at the opposite end of the *cul*. A tremendous shell scatters débris in a vibrating cloud! With the explosion one-half of a nearby house wrenches aside, opening a passage to the street—I slip through this. The street leads into the Pavé, which holds the entrance to the conspirators' stoop, and I am enabled to double back into their nest! There they stand in the back room, facing the other way, and meditating on my fate. I gather they hold designs on rescuing "the body," but. . . .

"Unnecessary, brothers," I advance.

A considerable scramble. . . .

"La, 'tis the Americain!"

"How you make the escape?"

"The devil himself . . ."

"*Vive l'Amérique!*"

I am rushed into the main-room with cheers and huzzahs, and ordered up to the counter, wine opened—healths drunk all around, etc.

All this horse-play is really only the matter of a moment, and now to the serious business of the day—a full line of necessities is loaded up by the big-hearted fellows for the 2nd Mitrailleur.

"How comes this I pay no money? Here is *poignon*."\*  
I exhibit the full *morlingue*.†

"Keep it! The money is no good here. We own all this!"

"Are you Pashas or just ordinary thieves?"

"Defenders of the Lily!" announces the *caporal* of the 160th with dramatic force. In peace times he is a poet of the poorest variety; that is to say, his verses are good but his clothes are seedy, which is another way of saying that he lived off his friends in the Montmartre district, nipping as he went and always infernally drunk.

"At your old tricks, Ary Blas, I see. You cannot earn an honest dollar. Who is the proprietor of this store?"

"I am not a robber and not a thief. Can I help it the stupid print-slingers do not gobble my stuff? Well, now that you ask it: the proprietor of this store is an uncle of mine!"

A burst of laughter from the assembled. . . .

"An aunt then—if you must have it so!"

Further cries. . . .

"*Canaille!*"‡ He tries to make a superb exit from the shop, strutting, but his unsteady legs double the clamour.

"Now who does own this store and whom am I to pay?"  
I finally insist.

"Yourself—and have it with the 'aunt's' regards!" a

\*Money.

†Pocket-book.

‡Rabble.

chorus screams. Determined to get some satisfaction from some one, I repair to the sergeant-major.

"Those drunken louts have appropriated the whole stock?"

"Impossible for you to get enough?" he enquires.

"Plenty! But who am I——"

"Nothing further to be said," he shrugs. "*Retourne vite!*"\*

The shelling at the front has eased except in the most vital sectors. Two separate attempts on the positions in my absence—one of which I so narrowly outwitted, though seven kilos distant!—are without success. The French defences are as yet unscathed.

Constant leaps on me—as do most of the others—with the most wolfish clamours. In a twinkling the *ravitaillement* is all out! Not a crumb—not a swallow remains. Our poor boys are in an anguished condition. They have been without food for four days, and the greater part of the time *sans* water also, for the shell-holes are fetid syrup.

"Why did you not return sooner?"

"Now, Constant, that is a foolish question. The first night I went away and the second I came back. To have attempted daylight forage was impossible."

"Of course. Only two days?—it seems an eternity!"

It must have. The company is appreciably reduced in ranks with a very low *morale*. All are gaunt spectres with wan cheeks, pasty, grey lips, and prominent cheek-bones.

A pallid prospect holds overhead—snow trembling in the balance and then falling with its old-time monotony. The 2nd Mitrailleur is in a stone-quarry, offering better protection than the open fields. Fifteen minutes sees the *frichti*† all devoured and pathetic eyes going out for more. The rattle of machine-gun fire spurs into the steady boom—boom! of the batteries, and we are at it hammer-and-tongs again with the Germans! They come over with a rush! Our mowing and slaughter of the hordes is appalling! The

\*Hurry back.

†Food.

carmine lips of the dawn part in anguish—her gorgeous banner protesting this vile vituperation with scarlet fire!

We send the *boches* into hell as often as they show courage over their entanglements. Great ridges a metre in height develop. Slain men lie crossways, lengthwise, widthwise, up-side-down, jumbled, jangled; stand upright, sit like gargoyles, grinning; murmur and mutter and shout out and whimper and pray—a *parapet* as efficacious and a farrago as complete as mortal or immortal man could ever comprehend! It is indescribable—but it produces no effect upon us at all. Either we are inured, impervious, or soul-satiated.

I am convinced a beautiful panorama would have been treated by us in exactly the same manner—which is to say, not at all! We would have looked neither with interest nor appreciation, nor any enthusiasm nor any distraction. We are somnolent in brain, dormant in heart, and alert to the point of frenzy physically! We force those mitrailleuses into a white-hot heat, reeling off death. We choke them and disgorge them with equal fervour—choke them full of lead and disgorge them at the enemy, so he pays the price in good blood-of-the-realm at every salvo!

Our *sous-lieutenant* goes out and two gun-crews complete! Our captain receives a deep shoulder-wound. The fifth consecutive Teuton offensive then crumbles to nothing and high noon finds us encamped—in fact, more strongly than ever!—before the "*Vallée de la Mort*," because heavy reinforcements have come up during the engagement, crediting the 20th Corps with a valour divine!

Verdun remains in France's hands!

It is apparent now, and assured. We are hailed as saviours—chalked up as super-men. The 9th of March, 1916, its sole remaining officer, Miette from Arras, leads the 2nd Mitrailleuse out of the "*Vallée*" and back to Verdun by a circuitous route. We are relieved. Rest and reaction set in. The abandoned aviation-camp here lends us a refuge. But not for long—March the 11th we start out of the township, pack into auto-busses, and proceed to St. Dizier under rain and continuous fog and chill. A bluish

company lodges on a farm one kilometre out of the city. It is midnight and a Sunday and a fine Spring day follow. We do the usual ablutions both to ourselves and our ragged garments, washing in a close-flowing rivulet of the East-of-France type. The totos swim away, trembling and kicking. We gloat in ecstasy!

It is always a pleasure to wash in France—in war!

Constant says, sprucing himself with more than ordinary interest: "Let us go to town. I have heard there are some interesting sights."

He winks at me, and for a reason which I cannot fathom, the whole company laughs. It is a joke they have put up. By the time we are in St. Dizier all the bells are tolling and the city-girls congregated at the market-square with little American flags.

"*Pour Phero Americain! Pour l'Americain!*"\* they holler, pinning flowers on my coat, throwing wreaths over my head.

"*Sacre!* What is the meaning of this, Constant?" I ask, annoyed.

"Sssh! No imprecations, *andouille!* Can you not see they are saluting you?"

And sure enough just at this moment they start in kissing, pecking lightly at my cheek or planting a resounding smack before the ear! It is all very disconcerting, particularly as I cannot make head or tail of the whole demonstration. Finally, having put up with enough, I roughly hold a girl away from me and demand to know by what gauge I have incurred so much bounty.

"*Monsieur l'Americain* is a modest man!" she giggles.

I shake her.

"Come, tell me!"

Constant interferes: "Do not pull the *demoiselle's* arms out!"

I release her, silently sweating.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"Why the boys," says Constant, "have told the towns-

\* For the American hero! For the American!

people that you are a son of Theodore Roosevelt and that you have come to save France! Ah—ha—ha!"

"Ah—ha—ha—you!" I let loose with both fists and flatten him! "You have put them up to this—*espece d'ab*—"

Cheers and loud shrieks and screams acclaim me further.

"He is a great fighter!"

"See how he does it!"

"He will whip them—the *boches*!"

"*Sá*, Teddy—Teddy!"

"So is the *père*!"

At the first sign of an opening I bolt! The 2nd Mitrail-leuse does not see me in two days! In that time I have worn the edge off my mortification and simmered down into a shadow of complacency. But life in St. Dizier from that moment forth stands a misery!

Happy indeed is one *poilu*—albeit an American by adoption—when the farewells are said to the Department of the Haute Marne, and the lion-hungry townspeople and returning troops from Verdun left behind.

March 21st we pass in Andernay, close to Sermaize-les-Bains. The latter township is a memory only. Retreating *boche*-forces from the Marne debacle have vented their spleen on its blameless exterior. Over this granite ruin a new Sermaize has sprung, a city of barracks, wooden and temporary. Ghastly tales of Teuton barbarism flood the district. Entire households have been strung-up for minor faults, some of the most trivial character—to listen to the village-gabble, that is. For myself, I have great doubts whether enough time was engendered during that closing of the "*Siegfried und Wotan Linie*" to permit of any such indulgences. They probably burned and ran, and left it to the spectators of the torch to save both their hides and as much of their personal property as possible.

The "*Establishment Thermal*," a sort of mineral springs which was immediately associated in my mind with a kind of air-tight container, contains in this instance an English Relief Mission—many young buds from Hanover Square. When they find I can "*parlez anglais*," it is all up with the

balance of the afternoon! A *Thé Dansant* is staged, the 2nd Mitrailleuse put through its paces on the dance-hall floor—a dining *salon* of the former hotel—and we come out of it gurgling with tea and a superabundance of broad “As” and narrow hothouse ideas.

The 24th is whirled in with a figurative blaze of trumpets, summoning the ranks to a review before the Prince of Serbia, who is passing through East France.

The Prince wears a “*shakko*”—a semi-Russian affair, fur, tight-fitting the head, with an inverted bristle-brush up-standing before. He sits his horse fifteen metres away. The horse lashes out with his tail—we take broad steps, passing before the royal presence—the Prince touches his gloved hand, protruding out of his fur-cuffed “*immensikoff*,” to his “*shakko*”—we stand and “present”—we take broad steps, marching away from the royal presence—the second wave advances—does likewise—so does the third—the fourth—and those following—the review is over—pronounced a success—and we are disbanded!

One week later we are in Tremont. We receive reinforcements to close up the gaps from Verdun, and our lieutenant becomes a captain and two fresh lieutenants come in. Captain Miette advances the 2nd Mitrailleuse to Bois de St. Pierre. The weather now is in full blooming Spring.

*Artilleurs*, posing about as we are, gathering strength for a new drive against the enemy somewhere, slaughter a wild boar in the jungles of the *Argonne*. This delicacy of delicacies—fresh hog-meat—tickles the palate with so much zest, it is with regret we hear the order to move and resume the usual *ragout de bœuf*.<sup>\*</sup> We march to Dombasle en Argonne. The fields are choked with heavy batteries—ordnance and munition products of “Papa Creusot.”<sup>†</sup>

Through this and into the city—we are now west of Verdun and almost in a direct line with it. The closest fighting-front is, however, north, where the emplacements take a wide swing toward Rheims.

<sup>\*</sup>Beef stew.

<sup>†</sup>Schneider's Munition Works at Creusot.

Passing through the town, Constant remembers he has lost his *pansement*. The "*pansement*" is a first-aid kit.

"Maybe I can get another. Come this way." He leads into a hospital—a large house flying the red-cross standard. "The *poste de secours* seems to have moved!" This last ejaculation is brought forth owing to the stillness of the place. No breath stirs in its confines. It has the silence of the grave.

"Where are the doctors? Nurses? Patients?" He sniffs rapidly. "There is no odour of antiseptic neither." He pushes open the door of the first room. Over his shoulder I see a bed and a form outlined on it. Constant discreetly withdraws, whispering: "Occupied. Be quiet—he is asleep!"

We move on then—through the halls, rooms—everywhere that utter quiet and desolation.

"Well, what is to do? There was some one in the front room I am sure." Constant is puzzled, and we repair back to the chamber.

"Look again."

He gingerly turns the knob and peers in; shakes his head, "What do you make of it—a *maccabé* maybe?"

Truly there is a lump in the middle of the bed and suggestive half-drawn blinds—a gruesome enough discovery. He shivers, drawing back. . . .

"Come, don't be a fool!" I brazen it in, my heart beating trip-hammer blows. Then all at once I laugh—laugh—laugh! On the bed is an unexploded 240—one of Germany's finest! It lies lengthwise, perfectly ensconced, like an *amoché*\* in the throes of perfect sleep. "*Panouille*, you have the heart of a crab—come here and look at your '*maccabé*.' " †

"Million devils!—is it a wonder the *poste de secours* moved away! That fellow came through the roof." Above is a great hole torn from the ceiling, going straight through

\*Wounded man.

†Dead man.

and letting in the sunlight. The shell could have exploded itself and the caravansary to powder! . . .

We move over hills and valleys to Esnes. We are now two hours from the front. The moon streams down with vacuous sublimity—so light that at one A. M. it is as clear as day! Marvellous this midnight radiance! The 2nd Mitraillease proceeds to the lines, arriving on the breast of Hill 304, the most famed position along the whole Western Front—“*Le Mort Homme!*”<sup>\*</sup> Directly on the hill—cristi!

“Take good care—this is treacherous,” we are warned by the departing troops, “it blazes here like the devil’s own  
.”

This is evident from the condition of the lines—straggly, ill-kept, wrecked, swimming with mud, foul matter, and coagula. Within ten minutes we are ensconced; within an hour the enemy is launching his ghastly counter-attack.

### *The Battle of Hill 304*

A light breeze seems to stir and bears in its wake acid fumes of the most acrid character. We hastily don our masks. The odour increases, blowing over from the right . . . —*sacre!*—it is the 156th they are gassing!—those d—— fiends from the Rhine! They are choking our *poilus* in droves! The breaking of 210s and 240s directly in our sector, lashes human-flesh right and left—whirls up dust-clouds and powder-smoke to dizzy heights!

Our *vis-a-vis*† are at it full force. Captain Miette, inspecting one after the other mitraillease of the section, passes from our crew to the right . . . steps within the radius of an *arrivée*‡ like a grotesque spectre, helmet and mask protective enough, God knows! before an ordinary danger, but nothing in the face of the calamity that vomits forth:

Crra—whrroarr!

\*Dead Man’s Hill.

†Face to face—the opposers.

‡German shell.

Oceans of fragments, flying, thudding débris, swim over everything! The *parapet* is hurled in this one place clear against the *parados*—from front to back . . . a shrieking wail is propelled through the reeking air! Pandemonium lets loose—shot after shot taking affect down the sector, ripping it open, demolishing machine-guns and soldier-crews, gushing forth blood and agony! We cannot manage the remaining guns—the shrapnel deluge is too heavy.

"*Dieu!* they wipe us out at this rate!" the sergeant cries. We crawl over—three of us—to a jangled mass . . . where the captain stood . . . pass over this, over to a crew suffocating from gas fumes. The sharp, pungent bite of it wafts over—we discontinue breath—it passes on the wind. Until the next wave . . .

Feeding, loading and firing, we take possession of the gun. The sergeant propels a rake-hell in the direction of the *boches*. It swings back and forth, strewing their lines. Rifle-bullets start a dizzy procession overhead. The third of our crew goes out! A new man is immediately in the breech, taking heart as he sees the gradual cessation of hostilities from the other side. Our undamaged guns come into action. The *sous-lieutenant* is firing one himself. After fifteen minutes of demoniac flash and flame, uproar and tumult, and another half-hour of melting offensive, the thing eases up. The scarred lines are choked with bodies, floating on syrupy water—glazed features of torso-less heads, mashed fingers, disjointed extremities.

The dawn of a vicious day speeds into this horror. Snow, sleet and rain commix to harrow us. The bombardment is continuous, though of lesser magnitude. April the 10th is entirely spent lying in corrupted water with idiotic grins, trying to ward off death!

It is called *holding the lines!*

How much rather would I breast an open attack than this stinking, morbid, gruelling watch—watch—watch—without quiver or palpable heart-beat . . . this pulseless guard that seems to raise every stifle of insanity in the blood—foment hysteria—incite the wildest imaginings and phantasmagoria

of pitless pits, soulless souls and breathless bodies! A riot of babbling thoughts oozes through the brain, outrageous, barbaresque . . . things break outside—inside; the whole network of man's intimate machinery jars into decay. He falls, dissolved internally, as it were—though perfectly sound without; shell-shock scoring where even shell-material cannot! . . .

Our sergeant has a fragment of shrapnel in his knee. He limps back to a *poste de secours*, the tortured, straining eyes of those well-in-body, spirit-weary men left behind, following him.

Constant murmurs enviously: "How did he get it? A slight wound like that at the proper time is a God's send!"

On the 15th we are fed reinforcements, which swells the company to normal ratio, replaces battered mitrailleuses with sound ones, and gives us back our captain—that is, the one who went down in Verdun with a shoulder-wound. The artillery has done all the engaging in the last two days, which leaves us to stand flat on our feet gazing into space and without the pleasure or relief of a single shot. Like sheep in the abattoir—ready to fall at the fatal second and without a chance at reprisal!

By the 20th we are relieved. The 2nd Mitrailleuse repairs back to Bethelainville, a point between Esnes and Dombasle en Argonne, and enjoys itself disporting among the ruins. A lone representative of civilian life—a crone of seventy-seven years—houses us in her cellar. We pass muster in an open field following this, and the auto-busses swim alongside in a torrent of rain and transport this well-nigh exhausted contingent to Mogneville. There it is Easter Sunday—just one year since that pathetic fraternization in Belgium!

## VII

### THE SOMME

THE sun is beating out its heart against a snow-white vista, straining for Spring glory and illy succeeding. The 2nd Mitrailleuse goes further—to Longeville, and takes the train there on the 24th of April to Breteuil in the Somme. Small relays of travel from Belle Assize to Faloise, to Fleury and to Bettembos deposit us finally in Amiens on the 1st of June in near-summer weather. We have been zig-zagging north, but after this it is west along a defined boundary between the English and French sectors. Forward it goes to the battle-front. North are the "Tommies"; south, the *poilus*!

"La, Americain, it would certainly be a marvel if we slept twice in the same place!" my *copain* cries.

In answer we move on to Hamlet. From here again to Cerisey, to Bray, and then to Suzanne. In Cerisey wooden barracks lodge the troops; the railroad terminates, and thousands upon thousands of heavy shells are unloaded in the fields. Bray teems with English regiments, bantering, swaggering; and a corps of *genie*\* constructs concrete emplacements for the offensive batteries. Suzanne, on the other hand, is obstructed with vehicles. The roads coming and going choke with lorries, *camions*, *caissons*, ambulances. *Territorials* keep these roads open, repairing hourly, and draining off the water.

The town is in decay as only a Franco-Anglo-Prussian victim can be! The usual demoralisation about the church property, half-ravaged houses, and charred *débris*. The *Etat Major*† occupies a feudal ruin, namely the *Château*

\*Engineers.

†Staff Officers.

*de Suzanne*, ultra-aged, ultra-picturesque, ultra-barbaric. In the big surrounding park the artillery-horses are stabled, English and French alike, drawing water from the spring in the centre, which is as well the supply of the whole acreage.

Our Colonial Army is at Ecluse and Curlu, which is south of our own sector at Maricourt, just below which, and in the valley leading over from Suzanne, are the suggestively-fresh mounds of a military French-British cemetery.

The offensive campaign is already opened along the whole front; not shelling, that is, but the preparations therefor. The valley jams with ordnance—munition of all calibres and kinds. From Maricourt the 2nd Mitraillease presses up a twisting *boyau* to the front lines, hemmed in by woods and solidly built, and passes a quiet initial night in the Somme.

"Americain," our *sous-lieutenant* seeks me out in the morning, "you were formerly with the *liaison* I am told."

"*Oui, mon lieutenant.*"

"Then you will make a good messenger. You know where the sergeant-major is lodged in Suzanne? He has the *effective*\* of the company. Ask him for all the *papellards*† for Captain Robilleux."

I salute and pass up the *boyau* to Maricourt. Here is a heavy congestion of lorries. The road up to Suzanne is blocked and impassable.

"Perhaps by evening," a *Territorial* suggests, seeing my plight. He means things will move.

Boom—boom!

The first artillery from the German lines blazes over for an opening salvo. Immediately pandemonium reigns on the highway. Horses rear, conductors rage out orders and instructions, not one of which the stampeding brutes will obey. The *marmites* plunge down in deadly style and I take refuge with the *Territorial* in a brewery partially-upstanding and partially-demolished by earlier bombardment. Here the shells shriek and play a tattoo until evening, then

\*Records.

†Orders.

straight through into the night. I can halt no longer. I pursue the way to Suzanne, arriving and receiving the *papelards* from the sergeant-major.

The fusillade is even heavier on the return. Whole *caissons* have dwindled into kindling on the road, and muleteers reduced to corpses. I decide to make for the brewery despite crashing shells, and dive across the road. Here is no brewery. . . . Have I made a miscalculation? Is the broken house to the left, the *poste de secours* off to the right in the distance, a replica without being the *exact* spot? . . . no, it is the exact spot! . . . it was here stood the brewery . . . yet, where is it? . . . where—

I commence to think I am the victim of some hallucination . . . there was a brewery here . . . there was —Crrackk—whrroarr!

In that spreading death I walk as one in a dream—searching a brewery—half-demolished, half-upstanding brewery — . . . Could they have moved it in the night?—ridiculous! . . . *we* are the only ones that move, we 2nd Mitrailieuse—move—move,—constantly. That is it!—I have confused the place—No!—I have not!—there is the up-ended lorrie, exploded in the morning. . . . Well—now the thing gets sickish—I am dizzy. I imagine I cannot see, — The sauce-pans sing . . . I have to find shelter—that brewery—where is . . .

Ah-ching—ching—ching—

Whrroarr!

The thing breaks feverishly near, splitting the air in two pieces, hurling it either way, and directly in my face! Small, moist drops squeeze out of the sky above and fall with a sprinkling drip—drip. It rains then in earnest,—lead, water — I cut across a large space packed with jumbled concrete and mortar . . . boards hurled this way and that,—glass in shivered bits, and a humped, indefinable object lying in the dirt, head driven in. I pry it out . . . the *Territorial!*

Ah, cristi!—now I have it, this is the brewery of the

morning's adventure, this crumpled mass of levelled limestone! . . .

Tramping across and over those shell-pitted fields, I arrive at a *boyau*. Which, does not matter. It leads somewhere and is free of the fire. It swims with corrupted water. *Guitounes* spring up at various intervals. Into one of these at haphazard I dive. The name posted on the outside is "*La Villa des Louftingues*," which means "Hotel of the Crazy Nuts." Not five metres away are the first of the 75s, barking like madmen, sucking in the shells from the hands of the feeders, who slam shut the *culasses*,\* pull the little cords as swiftly as eye can follow, and send the missiles winging on their way. A thousand shots are ejected without deflection of a millimetre from the true aim. The 75 is called the most accurate piece of artillery on any front. Perhaps the Austrian 88 comes next. I see now they are fed alternately yellow shells and orange, yellow for the shrapnel and orange for the explosive or contact. These are called *percutants*. Sometimes green are loaded in for a *gas rafale* and sometimes red, meaning incendiary. The whole demoniac night quivers with repeated thunder! . . . . .

I sleep like a baby. . . .

A peculiar prodding sensation at the pit of the stomach wakes me at dawn . . . a grimy figure stands before me of generous proportions. He wears *poilu-capote*† and helmet. His long, grey-white moustache is powder-blackened and earth-stained like the rest of his face, neck, ears. . . . In one hand is a cane which contacts my middle lingeringly; in the other a half-burned stump of a smoking cigarette. . . . In his eyes is an enquiry, deep and expansive,—

"What are you doing here?"

I scramble up and answer brusquely: "Sleeping, if it interests you, *espece d'abruti*!—"

"You will have to move."

"*Fout le camp au diable!*"‡

\*Breech-blocks.

†Soldier overcoat.

‡Go to the devil.

"Nevertheless you will have to move, *mon enfant*. Ten o'clock must find this vacant."

"Bah!—a *Territorial* cannot make a *poilu* obey. You think you have authority . . . who told you so?—you are nothing!" snapping my fingers in his face, he reddens and turns away.

I reach for my rifle. . . . A captain of infantry pops his head in.

"You have orders to leave this *abri*?"

"*Oui*," saluting the three gold stripes on his coat, "but I will not move on the word of that *Territorial*—"

"I would advise you to . . ."

"Why, *mon capitaine*?"

"Because it is General Marié, commanding the 11th Division of Nancy!"

"*Nom de Dieu!*"

"This sector belongs to the 69th Regiment of Nancy, and in four hours they will move in."

"*Merci*, I go at once!" And I move to the right where an English battery is firing repeatedly. I am about to enquire my route . . . a tremendous jar and resounding crash all at once awaken and the echoes in four directions reverberate, roll and roll!—choking gas fumes ride on the wind-swept air—a belch of smoke rises on the left, sliding like liquid into the sky . . . thick dust rises; moans, and a sodden scream float over . . . with one accord six of us investigate the ruin. It is a French 240—our largest calibre on the field! Jammed through some faulty weakness in the mechanism or adjustment, three men have been blown apart and the whole massive engine withered into fragments!

What awful horror is this, then?—we face each other silently in our gas-masks, the second-crew "Tommies" and myself, with the fumes streaming around and the quivering air settling down. . . .

*Oh, métier de métier,—vraiment, pourquoi?\**

\*Such business—why?

A shrug, a sigh: *C'est la guerre!*\*

Two hours later, after fording raging rivers, swollen from continued rain, and breasting further shelling safely, I deliver my *papellards* into the proper hands. Captain Robilleux knows now: his company is to attack on the 4th of July, 1916.

### *The Battle of Hardecourt*

With the concentration of artillery now rushing to the Somme, already 2700 pieces are massed—French and English batteries, 75mm. to 90, 105, 120, and 155 long, and 210, 240, and 380 short;—all provided with four to five thousand rounds of ammunition. The *cropouillots* and serial torpedoes are in the front lines, charged with 150 to 200 kilograms of explosives, intending to slice through the enemy's wire entanglements and crumble his *abris*. There is a change in the system: we will not mass for a general single objective, but each regiment or battalion will follow its individual own. This, I am informed by Constant, is due to the miscalculation of our artillery during the Champagne battles.

"Do you remember the trouble in Artois and *La Maison de Champagne*? We went too far and the batteries cut us off; well, and so that is all regulated now. We go only as far as Hardecourt,—not an inch beyond."

"I comprehend." I light a *seche*. We go down to the 75s that are spitting jets of condensed venom on the Teuton foe; and overhead is a stream of heavy shells rising—visible for several seconds—and tearing on toward the east,—the 210s.

Boom—thud—whrroarr!

T-zing—whroarr!

Boom—boom!!

It is the 27th of June and the offensive in the Somme is launched. The detonations are deafening. Spouting craters of flame belch from the Valley of Suzanne, tongues of fire leaping from the soil hour after hour. The whole terrain is

\*It is the war.

a kaleidoscopic patterning of intricate magnitude and terror. It flashes through the night; it blares and barks, quivers and reverberates with demoniac splendour! Sheets of red and yellow appear simultaneously, wave like a bizarre flag and instantly disappear, to resume in some farther quarter as violent and passionate as an East-Indian love, and equally transient! This brilliancy and its consequent uproar gushes forth and forth and forth—continuous, irrevocable, monstrous!

The trenches rock and sway. The myriad lights ricochet. The twilight shimmers and shrieks; the dawn trembles and groans, crashing with the unending tirade of shells overhead and din from the valley below. A tremendous and cyclonic upheaval continues through the day. No voice is able to be heard. Every *poilu* has cotton in the ears,—a squinting bleariness in the eyes—about the face. We salute a second twilight and a second dawn with the fanfare,—a third,—a fourth! Ah, God, such a maniacal, frenzied avalanche, streaming—streaming eastward! Bursting, tearing, storming, defying!

The first attack is prepared for the 1st of July. The 156th Regiment has the front from Maricourt to the right, extending as far as the 11th Division and the Colonials, and is, on the left, in *liaison* with English troops from Fricourt.

This gives a continuous advancing front; and we are on reserve with the brigade some metres back.

Boom-tzing!

Whrroarr!

The curtain lifts! A wave of horizon blue rises before the first lines and swells into a torrent! It sweeps forward, sinks, sweeps onward, sinks,—like the breast of a storm-tossed ocean—advancing, pouring up to the Teuton quay! — At seven o'clock, and with the red sun staring from space, a wild flame withers onto the attackers—*boche*-cannons flaring into the fray! They foam over to the Valley of Suzanne in a triumphant barrage directed against reinforcing units. Maricourt becomes a veritable seething

Hell. What we gave, we get!—shrapnel; smash and bang and thunder and detonation and reverberation! The whole thing is gone through with again with us on the receiving end,—mercy God!

The first *amochés*\* and prisoners come over two hours later—the latter in perilously-close-to-starving condition. We pass over our rations as long as there is a mouthful left, especially *bricheton*†—the emaciated, gaunt prisoners falling on this like hungry wolves. Constant passes among the *artilleurs* gathering further sustenance as he cannot stand their pale faces.

The daylight fades and the night lightens. Plunging *marmites* incessantly stream over the valley. We are powder-blackened and grave. It will be our turn next. The 156th, returning after their relief has gone into the conquered terrain, files past, ploughing up the *boyau*. A slender face stares at me—nods . . .

Durand—whom I saw last at Verdun! . . .

"How are you? Did the 156th make the objective?"

"More than that,—we lost only eighteen men," he responds.

"We?—"

"*Oui*. I am on the line now. Jean Raas and I transferred from the *liaison*. It was—well, yes,—it was just after you saw us at *Froide Terre*. He never got over Pierre. He says, 'I want to get out and be killed too!'"

"Is he dead?"

"Oh, no,—not yet; only eighteen men, I told you. He comes behind me."

Several minutes later a shuffling figure appears. It is Jean Raas, wearing a most vacant countenance.

"*Hola*, Jean!—one moment . . ."

He passes me blankly by.

I say to a sergeant following: "That boy knows me, but he seems to be 'affected.'"

"He gets the 'Medal' anyhow—he did a daring thing."

\*Wounded.

†Bread.

"What is that?"

He shrugs, continuing his march.

"The lieutenant thinks so anyway!—"

The 4th of July swamps with a continuous rain. We start toward the lines heavily laden with machine-guns and munitions. Sluicy mud oozes through the trenches—sucks in our *croquenots*.\* The order is passed along, man-to-man, man-to-man:

"Remember, HARDECOURT!—no further!"

The 2nd Mitrailleuse sinks down behind demolished *parapets*, posting its guns in position to fight off counter-attacks, and sits back to wait.

Ah-ching—ching—ching——

Boom—crrackk—whrroarr!

—ching, whrroarr!!

The *marmites* herald the attack and it comes with a rush! We aim—feed—fire, feed—fire, feed—fire, fire! In rhythmical ear-splintering cadence the mitrailleuses hum. Fritz falls back amid chaos, and the field is strewn.

The 5th sees a second hail of *marmites* and a second surge. Dust-grey forms loom up in heroic sacrifice before the gun-muzzles—crash into nothingness to earth! It is grandiose—it is fanatic, smacking of martyrdom; but the ever-diminishing hosts leave their ever-increasing toll upon the "*Champ d'Honneur*."†

The 6th adds natural horror to unnatural ghastliness: the rain comes down in torrents! It floats cadavers in huge puddles *entre les lignes*. By and by an opening is washed through the *parapet* where the wires are demolished, and one floated in!—

"*Sacré!* Will you take this fellow into your *guitoune*, please?—he annoys me!" I sing out to my *copain*.

"No *boche* shall sit at my table," Constant retorts.

"Put him underneath then."

"He is better off outside. I don't serve salad!"

\*Shoes.

†Field of Honour.

He refers to the expression "eating the salad by the roots," which applies to all *maccabés*.

"Get him before that opening then so he keeps his fellows out."

Constant, who is not on duty upon a mitrailleuse, boosts him into position like a sack, stuffing his head into a crevice. . . .

"*Eh bien*. Let them hammer shot and shell. I call that good protection."

From the rear comes a roll and rumble. A shriek passes over the *parapet*, frightfully close and spitting wind in our faces! A second follows, higher, and breaking further. The air comes in resilient and tempered with slashing water. It whisks in frequently after this; so much so, in fact, that by morning of the 7th a steady bombardment is once more in force, *départs*\* leaving our lines and gradually doubling and trebling. Now the atmosphere chokes with falsetto sibilation. The air agitates like a variable storm, stampeding and muttering; lashing in our eyes, exposed parts of our necks and ears. This weird inharmony continues until the sixth hour of day, when, the 8th having ushered in, the second offensive rises from our ranks, launches forward with determination; and, gritting and squirming, approaches the foe. Blue cloud clashes with grey! *Boche* and *poilu* lock hand-to-hand in cut-throat battle!

The 2nd Mitrailleuse becomes silent spectator of a slaughter supreme in the annals of Hardecourt!

Companies 9 and 10 of the 160th, swelling with a roar over the crest of opposing trenches, leap in,—over,—continue the fight into the village, slashing, stabbing, striking right and left, and falling;—but ever and anon keeping up the persistent hammer—hammer—hammer of the offensive until obscured from view by a rising tide of brown! . . . It is the khaki-clad Colonial horde, pouring *entre les lignes*—black Senegalese as ferocious as any African in the jungles, armed with butcher-knives,—terrifying, unsheathed in-

\*Departing shells.

struments, hungry for gore and determined to exact it! . . .

These trench-cleaning assassins bear down on the luckless Teutons. Without ignominy Fritz casts aside his guns, elevating his red-calloused hands, and begs for quarter. QUARTER?!—Heads are hacked clean off by the gloating Senegalese; ribs exposed at a twist; hands lopped and hurled in the air in the blood-lust and exuberance and riot! . . . No savage massacre in primitive Dahomey could show a swifter descent into animalism—naked venom and brute ravagings!

Within an hour we are ordered to move into the village won by force of French arms—Hardecourt. In shell-holes just outside we plant the machine-guns. Rapid counter-attacks, heavily enforced by battering-ram bombardment, leave us gasping but still secure at nightfall. The Senegalese are encamped about the village. Relief gives us a chance to inspect the ruins.

I ask my *copain*: "How is it the *sous-lieutenant* led us into Hardecourt?"

"Why not?"

"Captain Robilleux? . . ."

"*Amoché!*"

"When?"

"He lost his arm in the examination of Raymonde's mitrailleuse on the 6th. You remember the gun went out?"

"Yes. *Mais*,—that is the third time wounded, is it not?"

"Yes."

"And the lieutenant? . . ."

"*Il est bouzillé!*"\*

"*Sacre nom!*"

He shrugs.

"Well, how is that, the officers go—go—go? Whenever we have an attack there is nobody!"

"That is your imagination, *frangin*. Everybody dies—you, too—maybe, sometime."

"You talk like Jandray now—the big Parisian up in Arras. 'I am killed, but never he!' *Sá*, he lives,—but without

\*He is killed!

a jaw! . . . Let us look at the *guitounes* below here."

They are dug to some ten metres' depth, well-fortified with trees, reinforced concrete and rails. Much damaged, however, in spots, the aerial torpedoes have nested twenty, and, sometimes, thirty, *boche*-corpses in one cavern. Particular savagery ravages here with a heavy hand,—the gruesome knifing and double-edge thrusts of the Senegalese.

"Pah!—the brutes!" My *copain* turns one of the victims over with his foot. The heart lops out of the man and hangs sideways over the floor, held up by partial valves still innocent of the butcher's twist. "A savage profession, *n'est-ce pas?*—they are better trained at it than we."

He stoops and gathers up a grenade from the floor, flat and shaped like a crab. It is quite small and there are boxes and boxes of them—unused.

The odour is nauseating. We pass through the village—a cavernous hollow underground, a mortuary containing sound slaughtered human-beef! Dank and brutish blood smell encircles the place with a sort of vapour, sickish and stenchy.

Fritz comes over for a counter-attack again on the 10th under a vicious barrage, but with no gains; and the 2nd Mitrailleuse thereupon picks up its guns and equipment and marches for Bray, having been duly relieved.

We are short fifty-two men and four machines!

Bray-sur-Somme has been a neat township in its day—no doubt about that, and the honours for its desolation belong to the war. Yet now in its abandoned and cataclysmic condition, minus every comfort or vestige of a safe resort, another innoxious victim is added to the long list and a sad requiem must be pronounced by the chance visitor.

We dwell, besides a lot of English troops, in the principal villa or caravansary of the town, nursing its tottering walls with a sort of sportsmanship that even the crackling shells from Fritz's long-range batteries cannot dampen. It does not survive them long. On the third day a salute in the shape of shrapnel bursts in the yard! . . . Cries and groans in two tempos summon us. There a horse is ripped

open in the belly and two men are passing out. Pathetic, unalleviable situation! Before we can make the caravan-sary, a burst gets that! . . . an enormous detonation is followed by quaking walls, shivering, despairing, surrendering, descending!—the whole thing goes down in a cloud of *débris*!

One-half kilo over is the River *Somme*. Withdrawing hastily in this direction, we plunge in, rejoicing in the cool water as well as our good fortune to have been out of the building when the demolition occurred. An English "Tommy" is swimming near my *copain*, who tries in vain to understand his *patois*.

"Bloomin' bloody dangerous pond, ya know—sort of a natatorium without a cov—ah—gur—gur—glub—guggle——"

He ducks below as a sibilant sound shrills overhead—an *arrivée* buries in the water! A columnal water-spout immediately rises, foaming down and spreading consternation among the swimmers.

"I sy, cawn't ya wait?——" Our voluble Britisher is again on the surface, "ah—gur—gur—guggle——" A second shell cleaves over,—“this is gettin' 'ot; 'e 'asn't the manners of a coal-heave—'e—Gawd per-serve!”

The *marmite* explodes and throws a peculiar round something with force into the water before me, striking my arm, spreading crimson blots upon the pea-greenish, foamed water. *It is the calf of his leg*, torn apart by the violent messenger, and swirling in an iridescent circle!

"*Bande de vaches!*"\* Sputtering and strangling, Constant breaks for shore. His legs are kicking; his breath comes loud and short. Before him a *marmite* bursts, sending a spray of water into his mouth. He gives up and sinks, throwing out his arms. A "Tommy" dives for him—gets him to the surface when the slippery body of my *copain* slides through his fingers and disappears again.

"So 'elp me!—one o' you French blokes lend a 'and—think I can rescue him without—gur—glub—guggle——"

\*Herd of cows.

I am the only one who understands him, and, seeing me swim alongside, the "Tommy" dives again for Constant. My *copain* comes up a struggling, choking weight, lashing up in all directions. . . .

Ah-ching—ching—ching——

"Nab 'im, Francois!" gasps the "Tommy." "Take 'im under the arm-pits. So—you got some sense." He grunts approvingly, wiping the water out of his eyes. "Fight, will ya?—" He addresses this to Constant, hauling off and driving his fist into his face. . . . "That'll 'old ya, ya blitherin' h'idiot! Come alongside an' we'll see ya safe, so 'elp me!"

Ah-ching—ching——

"That'll do. Take it easy up there!" He looks up where the shells are still sending spouts of froth into the air at distant points. "Paddle 'im—swim 'im along. That'll do, —ya got a scratch, matey?" He sees a red daub like the crimson in a butterfly's wings on my arm.

"No. Your English friend bit the dust and I came in for a grand-stand finish—he decorated me!" I educate in good American slang.

He frowns. 'Paddling, he looks at me sharply.

"Matey, I suspect you are not French."

"I am American."

"Put it there! That h'accounts for the brains in your bucket. How comes it ya fight Franzose?"

"How comes it you know my name?"

"François?" He laughs. He pronounces it "Frankoize."

"We call 'em all that in the 'orizon—sort of a monniker like—like 'poy-lu.'"

"I see."

We get my *copain* to shore. The "Tommies" have been hesitating here, not knowing which way to turn as their clothes are some paces down the bank and the shells are breezing between.

"H'awkward situation—what?"

A fair-haired Apollo, whom I construe to be an officer, calls up a private.

"Daw!"

"Y-sa!" The naked "Tommy" salutes his naked superior.

"Can you swim the stream and cut over to the barracks?"

The boy looks dubious, hesitating over the feat—unable to say.

With that a brisk voice cuts in: "I can, sorr!"

Constant's late rescuer leaps into the picture, saluting his superior gravely. "I've made many a blitherin' league in the sea off . . ."

Ah-ching—ching—ching—

Crackk—whrroarr!

"Well, you make it! Tell Hem——" The officer's voice drowns under the increasing cannonade . . . they both salute, heels together, and as comical as two pagan images, and the swimmer starts back into the water, measuring clearly the distance with his eye.

I am working over Constant. He breathes, shudders convulsively once or twice and opens his eyes.

"*Eh bien*. Thank the British boy there for your life. He ——" I commence in French.

"'Sall—right! Only I'm not British,—I'm Irish!" rips out that cheery individual, leaping into the Somme.

We dine, on the evening of the 20th, at Suzanne. The weather is glowingly warm, and the low, furnace sun blazing into the valley, sends gleams between the frequent flashing fires of the 210s. The 75s have moved nearer to the front. Their objective is pressed further. We are advancing to take the lines once more at Hardecourt.

### *The Battles of Maurepas and Combles*

Directly back of the *Château de Suzanne* the *genie* has built a bridge. The Somme widens here, over-reaching Cappy.

Whisst—whroarr!

A splintering crash breaks up from the demolished bridge! Planks go sailing and ricochetting against the

*château*, slamming against its walls and crumbling the stones like chowder! . . .

A tense moment obtains after this,—we are all wondering whether the old feudal towers will resist the blast and continue to shelter the "*Etat Major*,"\* or whether they will disintegrate, charring to pieces and burying the luckless council under their archaic pollen.

They do last. The dust emanates from their crevices and deep voices rumble through their confines, the warmakers continuing uninterruptedly their schemings in behalf of the *Patrie*.

Our emplacement this trip to the trenches is within hail of Maurepas. There is an aero-field back at Hammel and engagements between the *avions de chasse*† of both sides are frequent. Our "sausages" are attacked and the observers forced to leap out under parachutes and float to the ground. Huge explosions are followed with roaring flames as the nearest two come under the bombs of the Teutons; whereupon Constant calls my attention to our planes that leap into the air with avidity.

"There will be a fine time, my *copain*, and don't you forget it. The fire is in the soul and once N—— and G—— get on their trail, it is all up,—that's a sure thing."

The French flyers climb and circle widely, overtaking their German foes at about two thousand metres. A running fight ensues . . . they are driving in the direction of Curlu, inside our lines and approximately three kilos to the south. Black flecks of smoke appear on their tracks; the anti-aircrafts hum a continuous, monotonous refrain, their full, deep roar punctuating the rattle above like thunder-claps. The first of the *boches* ducks down, turns three complete somersaults and rights, coming up to the attack only to be grenaded from above. He flops uncertainly—staggers—dives . . . in a long columnal haze of smoke goes down within the *faubourgs* of Curlu!

The remaining *boche* turns tail and starts toward his

\*Staff Officers.

†Pursuit planes.

own lines. Then our *avions* spiral from above directly in his fore, heading him off, sending him obliquely off southwest toward Cappy, and we lose them in a grey of clouds coming up from the horizon.

"Did I not tell you—they cannot beat us in the air," Constant avers with pride. He is a great advocate of the "overhead cavalry"; and, were he not too old, would transfer to this branch of the service. More and more of the *poilus* are expressing the same desire. The life in the trenches sickens—it grows ever more bestial, monotonous, refractory.

The aeroplanes being still abroad at nightfall, a brilliant pyrotechnic display spews into the Heavens coming up from the German lines. Red-fire hangs overhead like a volcano-crater inverted and shedding lava. From time to time a perfect rainbow of blazing balls succeeds one the other, rapidly and without chance for the leaders to dim. These *chenilles*\* as we call them, go up in chains, dawdling through the sky like crawling creatures, signalling the absent flyers to return to their home-hearths, as it were, after a midnight sortie. We have our own system.

"My brothers, we attack Maurepas in the morning," announces our sergeant on the evening of the 29th of July.

At six o'clock then,—the dawn blushing warm and dry,—ranks of blue-backed infantry, *sac au dos* and *bayonette au canon*,† pour over the *parapet's* crest and enter the village. A frightful bombardment has levelled dwellings to streets and streets into cellars. From these latter, as barricades, the last of the German mitrail-leuses blare forth, sending a rattling stream of projectiles toward the French advance, driving the men into shell-holes from which they can with difficulty pursue the offensive. Troops are therefore dispatched to right and left, encircling the township. The snipers are taken at the back, and being caught in the midst of their *diablerie*, dispatched without quarter.

\*Caterpillars.

†Knapsack to shoulder and bayonet on rifle.

Maurepas is ours! The 2nd Mitraillease, an interested and jubilant spectator of all this, leaps into the fray. Machine-guns are hauled forth, like Indian papooses, on the back, struck up in shell-pits just before the village, prepared to hold the gains at any cost. In the space of half an hour Fritz hurls a tremendous barrage directly into the town, tearing the heart out of an already heartless community, cutting off our reserves behind, and reckoning on a débacle among the 156th Regiment deployed variously through the underground net-work and cellars of Maurepas. But he reckons without his guests. We are prepared to combat this. The 9th Company charges directly in the face of these 77s blaring overhead, and rips the crews so badly they are forced to declare a defeat.

And now a strange incident marks the passing of these batteries,—not so strange after all, since it occurs frequently on the Franco-Prussian Front!—an Alsatian recognises his brother fighting *vis-a-vis*! In other words, the sergeant in charge of the 9th Company, in lieu of any surviving superior, rushes his men forward, bellowing at the top of his lungs:

*"Neuvieme Compagnie, suivez-moi!"\**

Then forward they start with a roaring volley, flattening and advancing, flattening and advancing, taking advantage of walls and obstructions to shelter their approach, and staggering in the face of the awful casualties as they leap over comrades' bodies into the arms of the foe! Hand-to-hand, the encounter is brief.

*"Kameraden Franzosen!"* goes up the wail.

The humane 9th hesitates before a mortal blow. In that moment of indecision, they look to their sergeant for the sign. He is faced with uncertainty. The crews have merited death by their persistence. . . .

"Strike—ah, no, no!" he screams, in mortal terror, allowing his upraised bayonet to sink to earth, quivering, pale and unstrung. "Ah, Marcel, Marcel——"

\*9th Company, follow me.

The *lance-pierre*\* clatters to earth—the brothers embrace, *boche* in the arms of *poilu*! The astonished 9th and its captives stare stupidly and open-mouthed. A brother has met a brother—recognised on the field of battle, in the lap of blood and turmoil,—one from the German and one from the French side. Born of identical parents, raised in the same Alsace, parted before the inexorable enigma of war. . . .

"Truly," says Constant, "there is a higher law than man's, and here is a demonstration of it. Marcel Delmanhorst would have been killed had he faced any other man. As it is—his brother came within an inch of slaying him."

I ask him astonished: "How do you know him?"

"I do not. But his brother—the sergeant, Rudolf Delmanhorst—was my *caporal* before I transferred from the 9th."

"Ah."

"We have many interests in common in Alsace."

"I thought you are from Paris, Constant."

"Born in Mulhouse; but I am a true Parisian," he smiles, "I have seen his paintings at the — Academy once in a while, this Delmanhorst—the younger. He had some talent."

"The French boy?"

"The German."

The music of the *marmites* breaks over fitfully. Two heavy counter-attacks are repulsed before dawn. Then we have further word to advance. The objective this time is north in a direct line to Combles. The crash and batter of shells swells up enormous. Whole curtains of flame jetty from the German lines, irregular, and straggling more and more as we advance. Now death spreads like a cancer through the company, plying its nefarious trade among our officers and men, until twenty-six,—thirty-two,—forty! are gone; and three mitrailleuses! At this rate we will be wiped out before nightfall. . . .

But the *boche* attempts against Maurepas result in a

\*Rifle.

fiasco; we press the advantage to Combles. On their side the English have moved forward with equal avidity, leaving a gleaming field crimson under the beams of the sun, with huddled groups and sanguinary corpses strewn in endless disorder. Hail from Heaven of human-flesh could not have spread a more noxious blanket.

The village is encircled—the last remaining blows are struck in the early hours of night,—then several thousand pick-and-shovel men arrive to consolidate our fresh positions. A firm emplacement is opened up, proper protection and stability assured, and we look forward to the coming of the relief as a sight too celestial for earth!

It is at last the 7th of August. Released from our post, we retire to Suzanne, to Bray, and, finally, as far back as Hammel, lodging in very temporary wooden barracks beside the humming aviation-field, droning like May-dragonflies in the breeze.

"Come, we take a look at it," Constant apprises me, eagerly obtaining a *permission*, and we advance to the nearest hangar. Long, squat buildings shelter these eagle-eyes of the artillery. The pilots, quartered in separate dwellings with a bunk for each man, are taking their sun in the open, gravely gathered about little tables, playing cards and smoking in the best of ease.

My *copain* nods with self-satisfied approval.

"You see, this is the life. These boys when they sleep,—sleep; eat,—eat. Look there—the kitchens, the beds, the air of comfort and refinement. They have none of the hardships of the trenches."

He lights a *seche*, offering one to the mechanic in charge of the hangar, addressing him also some questions on the type of planes.

"Oh, *oui*," finally retorts the latter, "unless a man can rudder upside-down, downside-up, dive, spiral, loop, wing-slip, whirl—well, he is simply no good for the present day aerial tactics. He has got to be a performer in the air—an acrobat, a humming-bird, a swallow—all rolled in one!"

"Do you have much damage?"

"Oh, *oui*, they all come down perforated."

"The aviators?" I interject.

"*Sacré—non—panouille!*" Constant nudges me disgustedly,—*"the wings!"*

"That is a marvel. And they fly any time—any hour?"

"Absolutely. The weather makes no difference."

"Suppose it rains?"

"Up or down, it is always the same." He means the shells exploding from underneath as well as the elements above.

"Then flying is fool-proof?"

"Well, not exactly. *Capitaine* Reul,—he approaches now—he—wait a moment—stand aside. . . ."

Two other mechanics spring forward and the plane is guided rapidly out on the field. Here a quiet hustle seems to permeate the air. Other scouts simultaneously run out of adjacent hangars, their *nacelles*\* mounted by close-helmeted, gloved, goggled pilots, the propellers turned over,—a devastating wind sent churning backward over the meadow . . . sudden roaring of the exhausts, and the whole crew speeds over the sward, mounts without visible effort . . . is off in wide spirals into the air! . . .

My *copain* draws a deep breath.

"*Magnifique!*" he says, nostrils distended.

It is all done so unobtrusively—so matter-of-fact.

Our informant says: "The captain was lost in a cloud yesterday."

"How is that?"

"He dove in and could not get out."

"Impossible! . . ."

"Oh, no. There is no way of telling direction or inclination once you are wrapped in a fog. He came out wrong side up."

"What! . . ."

"And the bombs were all dropping out of his machine,"—he laughs heartily,—*"it was the most amusing thing: he didn't know his head was down until he saw them fall!"*

\*Cock-pits.

Constant and I have a most delicate sensation—it is cold shivers.

We proceed to the prisoners' camp to have a look at Fritz. *Territorials* are on guard here over the blood-thirsty (?) crew—for the greater part old men and boys. In this enclosure—barbed-wired, and truly fitting cattle better than a human brood—temporary buildings are erected to house the five hundred inmates.

"Look at that, for the love of Heaven!" says Constant, pointing out a group labouring on the roads outside their enclosure under the guttural orders of an *unter-offizier*,\* one of their own particular breed. In each mouth is a pipe, and in each famished eye a great and pathetic relaxation, as if the burden of the whole soul had been lifted and a new and gentler resignation come to dwell in its stead. A single *Territorial* is on guard with a single gun, and in his mouth the well-worn pipe with a single diffusion of smoke.

"Well, that beats everything I have seen!" my *copain* exclaims, and I am bound to agree with him. "How stolid and unenergetic and home-grown they now appear—these devilish masters of the *marmite*, these imps of a Hunnish civilisation! Can you condone their present occupation with their past performances? *Bande de vaches?*—pah!—they are a band of sheep and the wolf is nesting inside!"

Back at our cantonment is a large reinforcement. The 2nd Mitraillease is once more up to war strength, and on the 12th of August we depart for Longueau, located near Amiens, where a burning sun sees us into dank cattle-cars and shipped off to Eu. Eu is in the *Seine Inferieur* near the seacoast, far, indeed, removed from the front, and a fitting haven for rest and recuperation. Our battalion lodges at Monchy sur Eu close by—a village of lesser proportions. The good two-months' sojourning sets in and Normandy and its romantic atmosphere float over the spirit like balm.

\*Non-commissioned officer.

"You may be sure the war will be through before they get us back, my *frangins*," say the more optimistic members of our company. "Fritz is stopped—we have him backed—and, anyway, let us eat and drink and be merry!"

But the great world war is not over. Fritz is not pushed back. On the 8th of October, when the soft life ends, and we are once more on our way into Purgatory, some such small gain as Sailly-Saillisel, eastward of Combles, is the only palpable indication that Fritz is weakening, and otherwise the mortality is not above the average,—which is to say that it is intense!

Our route follows now somewhat this pattern: Monchy to Moncheaux, to Reel Camp, to Illois, to Allancourt, to Plachy Buyon, to Croixrault, to Cerisey,—but what a change here!—Cerisey! . . . the throbbing, businesslike, undevastated, optimistic Cerisey of June last . . . it is now in the most total desolation that can be imagined. Not a house, not the railroad station, not a car on a siding, but is cluttered in satanic confusion over every quarter,—and not any one location holding all of anything.

What a strange thing to pass through an able-bodied township—to be part and parcel of its hustle; the cottages smoke at the chimneys, the maids stand in the door-frames, the trade carries briskly, the whistles of plying trains echo through depot walls out over the fields into pasture-lands, the munitions of a countless army disgorge and stack—stack—stack into the sidings, the villagers lush, toasting long life to the Republic of France and confusion to her vandal-enemies; and then—four months posterior to all this, the gaunt spectre Destruction stalks through its streets and a gay community crumbles to ashes! That, for the eye of the casual, chancing into Cerisey, is the sole impression in Fall.

A gay, young *poilu*, greeting us on the street with snatches of song, is amazed at our chagrined expressions.

He sings out: "Why are you so sad?"

We reply: "Why are you so gay?"

He explains he is on his *permission* and all the world looks lusty and bright to-day.

"It is not so! What has happened to Cerisey?" we exclaim indignantly.

"Nothing that could not happen to any other well-brought-up city under the same circumstances," he responds, merrily,—*"Shelled from above, my copains, and still smoking."*

*"Hé, how is that?"*

"The German planes swooped down two weeks ago and bombed away like the devil; thus the ammunition depot went up and the whole town went down, and everybody blew to smithereens! Is that quite clear?"

*"Everybody? . . ."*

*"Not quite. I am here you see."*

*"Diable! Tell us who was killed and who was not!"*

"Some citizens, some troops. Contrary to the usual programme—no children, but a vast amount of property as you can see; and—oh, yes! the prison camp with three or four hundred fresh *boches* from Sailly-Saillisel. They scattered like hornets before a smoke-jar; some went into the air and some into the Somme,—but whether up or down they merited what they got. It was their spark touched us off."

*"The beautiful Cerisey!"*

"Go down and you will see the bodies floating in the river. They make a fine dam."

"I do not believe it is as bad as that," Constant confides to me. "The Somme is a pretty swift-flowing stream. But all the same it is the townships farther down that will eventually get the corpses and a stinking, stenching lot they will be by that time. War is a foul institution."

We advance to Cappy and Curlu, and over the hill delineated the "*Château de Gendarme*"\* rising above swampy country, interlaced with boggy *boyaux*, ravaged and exploded—a shell-torn terrain. The hill is a trophy of the successful drive of the Colonials against Fritz earlier in the year. We move down upon this battlefield. We pick

\*Policeman's hat.

our way through moist craters, "marching by one," and deploy in the gathering dark in a great snakey line toward Hardecourt.

"*Attention au fil!*"\*

"*Attention au fil!*"

"*Attention au fil!*"

The order is passed from man to man. November blasts sing a chill requiem and the desire for hot coffee goes stoutly abroad. The 2nd Mitrailleuse, however, being without kitchen and continuing from point to point along a devastated route in quick succession, obtains only frozen nutriment and this without abundance. Maricourt is in ruins; Hardecourt, a memory; Maurepas, a tragedy! The same destruction and the same utter, wanton, cruel, woeful lot cast to each settlement in turn as the adder strikes.

In the Ravin de Maurepas is a substantial unit of artillery. A *tako*† supplies the needed fuel for this organised herd of death-angels. Farther over an English tank engages momentary attention. It is the first of the monsters we have had a close-up view of.

Camouflaged after the manner of all prominent objects on the front, long chains of thick, solid rubber and steel intermesh to form the rotating base. From a V-shaped nose two muzzles protrude, and, farther back, on movable platforms, two additional ones. The mechanism is entirely enveloped in armour-plating.

On our departure for Combles a *rafale* of Austrian 88s blares over, kicking up the dust and pitting the roadway every other metre.

Bordering the highway, the *platanes*‡ have given way to stumps, amputated low down on their sturdy trunks. Truly it is pathetic. Combles, former mistress of three thousand souls, virile and charming, breathes now but in snatches through tottering walls between the uproarious peals of engaging sides. Two houses are standing! . . .

\*Watch out for wire-entanglements.

†Temporary railroad.

‡Plane-trees.

Turning now toward the right and skirting the cemetery of Fregicourt, disinterred, a litter of granite head-pieces and mutilated remains, we pass through the *boyau* to Saily and Saily-Saillisel—equally disrupted and disconsolate—and into the lines now advanced thus far.

Morning sees two men of the company go out.

"We are on the *ravitaillement*," announces Constant. This means a journey to Combles to connect with the rolling kitchens, and a scramble through drenching rain to re-creation the crews.

"*Diable!*" the *corvée* is cursing,—“is there no regard for us in this miserable sky overhead? Must we slash through mud to the knees daily with the d——d *croute?*”<sup>\*</sup> Each man has his pack strapped firmly to his back, and now a slipping, blaspheming file starts its procession forward. An ocean of slush uncovers. One after another the 2nd Mitrailleuse goes out with frozen feet and her crews are relegated to base hospitals along with other of the unfortunate brothers from similarly affected units.

I am limping on the night of November 21st with my rations behind Constant, and the wind mutters up the *boyaux*, freezing them ever lower and lower with its sinister breath. We pass the cemetery of Fregicourt, the dismal, shattered head-stones rattling like dice at every gust. The cold is biting intense. To add discomfort a German barrage comes over, piercing the roadway, churning up *débris* and a hail of leaden slugs! A *caisson* of artillery in the van of our *corvée* dives directly into this! . . . there is a crash and roar . . . ear-splitting detonation, tempered with screams of anguish . . . mortal terror . . .

I leap behind the rear wheels of the *caisson* to escape fragments of the conductor and two horses raining down! . . . a severe something strikes across my hand at the knuckles, sending an agony of pain to shoulder and breast! . . . “ah, God—I am touched . . .” I moan and feel faint.

Constant drags me by main force to the nearest *boyau*. A *fusée éclairante* budding here and blazing a white light

<sup>\*</sup>Food.

on the front-line trenches, shows gleaming blood reddening the fingers of my right hand and drip—dripping in a sodden stream to earth. My *copain* dresses the fourth member presently with gauze from the *pansement*.\* The highway is in desperate condition with kicking horses and *marmites* playing a glorious tattoo. We advance to the lines through the *boyau*.

"It will not be much. You see, it soon heals," Constant assures me of the scratch,—“you were lucky, American, to get out of it as you did, and I——” He holds up his hands in silent mockery of fate. “I was born to be hung!”

The next night in Maricourt, however, the hand inflames, blackens. My arm throbs. Flames seem to be leaping up my coat sleeve.

“*Nom de Dieu*, I cannot stand it any longer!”

“Then come, we visit *toutbibe*,” says Constant kindly, leading me to the surgeon, who cleans and dresses it, scouting the idea of infection.

The 2nd Mitrailieuse moves to Camp Celestin, a temporary wooden barracks near the Valley of Suzanne. There I fall into a sort of delirium. My injured member grows more painful, finally ceasing to be of use.

“*Monsieur le Major*,” I appeal to *toutbibe* again, “you will have to do something. I cannot stand the inflammation. If it is impossible to cure here, send me away.”

He makes a second examination.

On November 26th, with my *Fiche d'Evacuation* attached to the front of my *capote*, bearing name, company, regiment, and nature of disability, I arrived in Bray-sur-Somme, leave the ambulance for the field “*Hopital de Triage*,” and am relieved of all equipment with the single exception of the *musette*.† A quantity of antitetanus serum is injected. I am then dosed with hot tea and asked innumerable questions any of which could be read from the *Fiche d'Evacuation*, and these all carefully noted down and an itemization of the case prepared. Arrivals conclude their examination by being

\*First-aid kit.

†Canvas bag with reserve ration.

hustled off to various sections designated sick, dangerously- or slightly-wounded, according to the nature of their complaints.

I am assigned to the latter ward.

I enter.

"Name? Age? Regiment? Company? Home address?"

The clerk drones this off in tick-tock order.

"Now," says he, concluding this second report, "be ready to move on a moment's notice."

I am moved in an hour. I dismount at Cailly. Entering the field hospital, flanked before and behind with invalided soldiers, the clerk murmurs at sight of us in an apologetic manner,

"Name? Age? Regiment? Company? Home address?"

The same examination is jotted down with the same amount of blue ink and paper. Supper is served. Beds are distributed. The following morning I am treated to an inquiry regarding my disability. A red-nosed, black-browed, thick-necked surgeon, with the exact delineations of a butcher and the voice of a crow, slashes the offending member wide, scrapes it to the bone, packs it, straps two pounds of cotton over it, and sends me out reeling to a sanitary train, so-called.

"Name? Age? Regiment? Company? Home address?"

After being duly notated again, this time on the moving *poste de secours*, luncheon is offered us. It is December 1st. A stop is made at Amiens. Red Cross workers spread cigarettes and oranges through the cars.—We are directed to a *depot d'éclopés*,\* containing a thousand men under the single roof of a high-school building.

"Name? Age? Regiment? Company? Home address?" snaps out the ever-present interlocutor. I am assigned, reassigned, and examined by two physicians, the hand being unwrapped, the infection exposed, the whole

\*Infirmary.

thing being wrapped up again with "ahs" and "ohs" and instructions given to transfer me as rapidly as possible to a neighbouring hospital—a former nunnery.

"Name? Age? Reg——"

"For mercy's sake, is there no getting acquainted with the patients in French hospitals? I have given my pedigree six times since being *amoché!*" I exclaim irritably to the clerk, who scrutinises me leisurely after this outburst, adjudges me sane, and says in a nasal voice, applying his pen to paper:

"Name? Age? Regiment? Company? Home address?"

In the midst of the inquisition a door swings open and a young nurse makes her appearance. She takes a position at my side. On the examination being concluded, she hustles me without ceremony to a bathroom, strips off every vestige of my clothing and souses me into a bath-tub! . . .

"Cristi!—mamsell——"

A mouthful of soap!

She scrubs me off, disregarding protests. The water is hot—steaming—billowing . . . my flesh turns lobster-pink.

"But, mamsell——"

Further scrubbing. When I commence to like it, I am whisked out, rubbed, piled into fresh linens and encased between sheets.

"*Mais—mais*—I am well—I can walk—I——"

She gives me a withering look, closes the door quietly and retires.

My room is in semi-darkness from the effect of shades half-lowered, but I see I have a roommate—one other sleeper. He snores heavily and I am commencing to wonder whether his affection is as vital (?) as mine, when a loud noise goes through the air, spitting wind at me—a *marmite* ploughs up the earth and it floats over in huge clouds and all at once the-rain falls in sheets and my wife says, bringing a steaming dish upon the table: "François, I have had two proposals in case you are killed!"—and I am killed and I see Constant standing over me and saying

to a man without a jaw: "You were right, Jandray, he was *bouzillé* as you said. Good fortune cannot last forever, and this Americain——" "I am not dead!" I say indignantly, rising, and the *boches* come over the ridges at Verdun carrying pitchforks like demons "to catch the rain," they say, and we walk through the "*Vallée de la Mort*" and all the bodies start to cry and cry so the tears flow out like an ocean. Then we get in a boat—all the *boches* and myself alone, and start to ride through the sea. A periscope bobs nearby and I say: "Look out!" But the captain of the *boches* pulls it up and it is a *rosalie* and it starts to melt so it forms a pot. "For shame," says my wife, pulling a lobster from the pot, "you should not associate with Germans. It is against the *patrie*. Oh, François, I am so——"

I open my eyes, and it is still light in the hospital. My hand is freshly dressed and oranges and cigarettes are beside my pillow. The door opens and my nurse steps in,

"Oh, you are awake!"

"Have I slept?"

"Twenty-four hours," she smiles amiably. "*Mon pauvre petit*, you will be better soon."

"I am not sick. Where is my *tocarde*?"\*

She looks puzzled.

The boy in the next bed starts to laugh.

"*Panouille*," he says, "you are not in the trenches!"

"What is that?"

"You are in the hospital. Say '*montre*'† to the lady."

She starts to laugh. I commence to hate him. She is very amiable—very chic indeed!

"Here is your—*tocarde*," she says with an effort over the last word, handing me my time-piece. "*Maintenant*, you eat!"

My watch is on the same stroke as when I entered the hospital, yet it seems to be going.

"What is the hour correctly, *s'il vous plait*, *m'amselle*?"

\*Slang for watch.

†Watch.

"What does that say?" She points to my watch.

"That is wrong. It is eleven o'clock on there."

"It is right."

"What? ! . . ."

"I told you—you have slept twenty-four hours, my fine fellow."

I am astounded.

"No wonder I had such dreams!"

"What about?"

"Verdun."

"Oh, tell me!"

"What is there to tell? Fritz fell on his nose, and that is all there is to it."

"Ah, you should have been in the Champagne," says my roommate gloatingly. "There was a slaughter-pen!" He wags his head. "Not a man—not a cannon left at Beausejour. Down they went like chaff before the flail. We ran right over and the entire German defences crumbled. I tell you—that was fighting. Hand-to-hand, we butchered and they begged. Singlehanded I took a whole emplacement. 'Well,' says my *capitaine* after the victory, 'Sainte-Breuve, you are the wonder of the war—I recommend you for the "*Croix*.'" Some day you will be a great general like Pet \_\_\_\_\_,"

"*Un moment*, my friend, are you quite sure this is true?" I face him bluntly. "Can you tell me, for instance, what time the attack was launched on Beausejour?"

"*Mais, oui,—certainement*. At five o'clock."

"You went over the *parapet* at five?"

"*Oui*."

"Then you must have gone alone! The 160th Regiment did not advance until 9:30 o'clock, as you will find if you take the trouble to enquire of some one who *was* there."

He sneers: "I suppose you refer to yourself?"

"Exactly. Furthermore you are a *mariolle*,\* and if you have ever been inside of a trench you know what that means!"

\*Bluffer.

"Oh, *monsieur*, you excite yourself," mutters the little nurse.

"But not half as much as he will once I am—oo—oo—ouch—h," sputters my worthy roommate, sinking down from his elbows after having elevated himself the better to shout at me. "Now, see here, who knows the shoe is not on the other foot? Can you prove *you* were there?"

"I can at least give you the name of the commanding officer and any other little incidents you may desire."

"Well, and who was it?" he asks weakly.

"Médouin, *Colonel du Regiment Cent-Soixante*. Bouri-er was *commandant* of the 3rd *Bataillon*."

"We called him '*Bec d'Ombrelle*'\* because he has a face shaped like the parrots on the umbrella the demoiselles carry in the streets of Paris," I say jokingly to the little nurse, who is immediately restored to good humour and begs us to quit talking and go to sleep.

"What, again! No, this time I get up and go for a walk."

"You do nothing of the kind!"

"Why not?"

"You are sick."

"I am not. Mademoiselle, truly——"

"The doctor has ordered it. That is sufficient."

Nevertheless when she leaves the room I leap to my feet, scrambling into my clothes.

"Ha! You have been deceiving the hospital authorities," my erstwhile warrior from the Champagne shouts, his eyes glittering.

"To the contrary, they have been deceiving me! I said I am well; they insist I am sick. And to prove it——" As I start for the door, it opens and a medical officer walks in,

"How—are you up?"

"I am in perfect condition except for this hand."

"I see. Well, you will be transferred."

He makes an inspection of my roommate's trouble, which

\*Umbrella handle.

seems to be a broken leg, and with many groans and "ohs" the operation proceeds until the whole member is carefully dressed, when we leave the ward-room.

"This is a hospital for the severely wounded. You will be sent to the *region*," the surgeon tells me.

"Will that be soon, *monsieur le Major*?"

"On the ninth of the month."

I bid good-bye then to my chagrined *mariolle* and the charming hand-maid of us both, and drive with a lot of convalescing patients to the railroad station. There we are lunched by the Red Cross, and taken for an eleven-hour journey to Etaples; from there travelled still further by automobile to Paris-Plage,—arriving in the dead of night.

"Name? Age? Regiment? Company? Home address?"

"*Mais*—here are the papers, look over for yourselves, *m'ssieu's!*" I hand over columns and columns of pedigree gathered together from all the various question-depots encountered up to the present; papers congregated at my last hostelry and turned over to me there. They are red and blue and green and yellow, and all the approved colours of the rainbow.

"That will not do. Please answer: Name—age—regiment——"

In a sing-song voice the new documents are made out. My papers confiscated along with the rest of my clothes, I am once more rudely shocked into the most adjacent bathtub and scoured off by a haughty Englishwoman of dignified, challenging presence and a broad-A, masculine voice.

A mincing English school-girl puts in her head,

"Your ladyship will have the towels now?"

"Ah, yes, Cecile; and get the 'Tommy's'—that is—ahem! the boy's sheets ready as he comes out of his bawth, deah."

Again I have nothing to say; and again I am rushed to a sleeping section, rebellious all the way.

My dowager says composedly and without the least little sign of a ruffle: "My deah sir, this is a hospital. There is no fuss made here."

I find myself on the third floor, facing a nurse with a lead-pencil and pad, and in my hospital pajamas burst out at once:

"Name—François Xavier —; age—thirty-two years; 160th Regiment; 2nd Mitrailleur Company; home address—San Francisco, California."

"Really—an American!—how interesting! . . ." She jots away with the most painstaking care.

"Extraord'nary!" sniffs my dowager, leading me by the hand as if she feared her invalid might cut and run;—and together we go into the ward . . .

It is a dainty one with dimity curtains and blue-and-white quilts like a bridal suite . . . and nurses are browsing about with square paper-pads in their hands.

"If another one asks me she shall have a sick man on her hands, and that is a sure thing!" I vow. "No wonder France is short on paper. They used up two reams describing my case, which is liable to be healed before they get it all compiled."

I have three accomplices-in-illness in this ward, and we sleep in brass-beds. The luxury of this and of springs and mattresses, carpets and electric-lights and steam-heat, is almost overpowering! My roommates look pale from want of hardship.

"My *copains*," I say, having succumbed to the harsh treatment of my nurse, and slipped between the sheets, "is there anything more gratifying than war?"

A manly voice pipes up: "*Oui!*"

"What is it?" I challenge.

"Being wounded!" he retorts, which sets us all off on a laugh.

But not all are as well off as I; for, with the exception of my split finger and numb shoulder and some temperature, I am as strong as ever before in my life. The boy in the first bed is delirious before dawn. He has two bullets through his lungs. Number 2 is minus an arm—taken off at the shoulder. Number 3—my closest neighbour—has bandages over his head. His skull is bruised and one ear taken off

and some other troubles, he infers; besides four fingers.

My own scratch seems trivial in comparison; still the doctor gives it two more days to heal, "And then," says he, "if it is gangrenous it will have to come off."

Bad news, and in such a beautiful Summer Resort too, for Paris-Plage is a watering-place near Boulogne-sur-Mer. The hospital on its peace-footing was the *Hotel de l'Hermitage*, modern, new, concrete, and pleasure-built. Gay throngs sped through its corridors, brass bands blared; recreation floated along on an even tide and millionaires crossed the terraces.

Paris-Plage is now an English encampment. *Chalets* and cottages are given over to the officers. Immense contingents reserve here for Etaples, from which point they are travelled to the front, having come in from Dover via Calais or Folkstone via Havre or Dieppe.

For two days, then, we are uncertain about my hand, but at the end of that time, X-ray examination sets me at ease—it will not be stumped.

We have Christmas Trees; we have theatres and *bistros*, and a good deal of petting from the English society women, not the least of whom is my haughty dowager of the masculine voice and exaggerated manner. She is somewhat of a personage. Her commandments ring out as I imagine the original "Ten" must have had they not been prematurely tableted.

She approaches the whole township in an effort to gather together a surprise-box for my Christmas—following this resolve with especial unction.

"Have you some cigarettes, Captain Brandon? It's for the American, you know—our American boy in the 8th Ward. He's fighting for France—and, of course, for England! Oh, thank you so much—you don't know what a favour—— Oh, Lieutenant Lourd, how generous of you! Those cigars—— My!—Harry, you overwhelm me! . . . This razor—oh, I know he'll be transported! . . ."

I dive quickly out of ear-shot to allow the gushing re-

cient to get by without knowing that I will not be either surprised or transported.

The holidays are, however, spent in the most congenial manner. It is the 11th of January, 1917, almost before it is the 1st! I am instructed to take myself and papers to Nancy, there to convalesce before returning to the trenches. I have also an order on Noisy-le-Sec to obtain a complete new outfit.

Noisy is just outside of Paris in the *Seine*. Several *embusqués* of the correct military age but without having seen a particle of trench-service, direct me to Mont-Notre-Dame in the Aisne, where I am supposed to find the regiment, and from there to Paris, Gray, Chalindrey, Isle sur Tille, Neufchateau, and Toul, in quick succession, and always quite in vain. I find myself in Nancy in the end, no better off.

"Hola, Americain!" cries a cheery voice on the *rue St. Jean*,—"where have you been skulking while the Army Corps labours in Lorraine?"

"In Lorraine! . . ." I ejaculate, recognizing a sergeant from the 2nd Mitrailleuse.

"In the *forêt de Parroy*. I am here on *permission*."

"Well, then we can go back together. Meanwhile let us find a restaurant."

## VIII

### THE AISNE

WINTER is casting her bleak mantle over the equally cheerless vista of an approaching Spring acknowledged to bear on its shrill tide the strangling lust of a still war-inflamed frontier. The cold is paralysing. The snow falls in a stealthy, silent manner. We proceed to Millery. A rumble of sound like the braying of ten jackasses and swelling into positive discordance on the frosted air, jars from the direction of the station-house.

"Sah, what is this? . . ."

"It sounds like Nicodemus," I say to my comrade, who frowns, not understanding the reference to my adventure in *Froide Terre*.

We push open the station-door and a chorus of laughter bursts out. Eleven freshly-outfitted *poilus* are seated against the wall, and a twelfth standing before them, waving his arms like a concert-*maestro*. A sonorous, harmonious chorus swells up to the rafters:

"*Pourquoi si triste—sss—sttt? . . .*"\*

"Yahhhh!"

Ending up the serio-comic tune with this exclamation, Constant leaps from the end of the line and comes toward us!

"*Sacre nom d'un nom*, Americain, you are always turning up when no one wants you!" He greets me affectionately and the others crowd around with shouts and tumult.

"Well, there is André! How are you, bridegroom?"

"See, there is a bridegroom—hola, my friends, he is blushing like a girl!"

My poor, unfortunate comrade is rushed off his feet and

\*Why so sad? . . .

out into the street on the shoulders of a *poilu*, the whole mob trailing after bawling out his predicament to the village rustics. He is freshly married on his present *permission*.

"Shall we find the company, Constant?" I ask my *copain*.

He shrugs.

"Let them find us."

"*Mais*——" At this instant an *embusqué*\* enters wearing the "*Croix de Guerre*."

"Pah! That is the way. The man behind the lines wears it!"

"What do you mean?"

"That *andouille* there,—you think he ever got it for bravery? No—some brother-in-law is some minister's secretary or servant or something, and he wears a decoration. That is low—I don't want it!"

He walks away, spitting contemptuously.

"Why? Have they been thinking of decorating you, Constant?" I ask, following after.

"We are the men who should wear it!"

"Well?"

"They give it to these loafers."

"That is all right. When it comes our turn . . ."

"They can keep it!"

"Now, what is the matter?"

"Oh, they make me angry. Nobody with self-respect wears the '*Croix*' any more. It is only *embusqués* who have never been at the front. Disgusting—bah!"

With sufficient patience one can accomplish anything. After so much search for the regiment, it is indeed the regiment that finds us! It is on its way to Frouard. We proceed along, reporting, and receiving rations and wine. Our quarters are beside a munitions factory where a good deal of shelling is constantly in vogue. Aeroplanes drop

\*Government official, such as clerk or munition-man, who shirks first-line duty—looked down upon by the *poilus*.

bombs and long-range guns sputter over from the front. We are set at digging *guitounes* in the back yard of the factory for the workers. In case of raids it will then be propitious to drop under cover until the damage is done,—or passed over.

A slim figure comes out to inspect our work, nonchalantly, and in passing. It is one of the munitions workers, dressed in dark blue overalls, presumably twenty-two or so years of age, and healthy and elastic-looking—from the back, at least.

"These fellows should be at war," I say to Constant.

"You think so? Well, why don't you tell him?"

I address the figure sternly: "I think it is an outrage you are not at the front!"

Two mild blue eyes look around out of a crop of golden hair.

"Ah—ha—ha!" laughs Constant.

"Ah—ha—ha!—well, laugh, *espece d'andouille!*" I thunder when she is gone. "You nearly made a fool out of me! Why did you not tell me it was a woman?"

"What for have you eyes?"

"Really, Constant, sometimes I think you are a——"

"Ah—ha—ha!"

The morning following ushers in bombardment. Now the *arrivées* come rapidly overhead, plunging for the most part into the Moselle, but otherwise ripping open several streets and putting to death civilians and dogs. The mercury falls with equal fervour. Our bread freezes; our *pinard* solidifies. Even the morning ablutions are coated with ice, so a dash of water in the face causes the head to freeze before a towel can be applied.

However the months roll around. It is the 14th of March when we quit Frouard. At Villers les Nancy a frightful storm impedes progress, the snow whirling on long terrifying blasts of wind, blanketlike, over the soil, racing up frenzied clouds and swirling the wet particles down our *capotes*. By slow stages we reach the Aisne. Another indefinite space looms before us.

"I have had enough of this inaction," Constant grumbles.

"So have I!"

"And I!" André adds.

"If we do not take a hand the war will be over," mutters a fourth member of the company. "Let us approach the Captain and ask for a transfer."

It is to the 5th Company we are transferred—a unit of infantry slated for early offensive, still in the 160th Regiment and the 39th Division, 20th Army Corps. We are the "*Division de Poursuite*," that is, a relief troop which is rushed into already negotiated gains to hold these at any cost. It is in April—the 15th, to be exact, and five o'clock in the morning—when we start out. We have reserve rations, grenades, fresh, full equipment. From Launois to Muret the weather is warm with occasional flashes of rain. We march to D'Huizel, to Bourg et Comin, and lodge in a forest.

"Do you know where we go, Constant?"

"Oui. West of Graonne," my *copain* responds.

"What is there?"

"Offensive along the *Chemin des Dames*."

"Ah."

The *Chemin des Dames* or Ladies' Road, a name given to it for no particular reason since it differs in no wise from any other road in France, all being wide and planted with trees, save in the ferocity of the fighting there, is in German hands. The present proposed French offensive is for the purpose of winning it back. There is some strategical value attached to this. Some gains, we are given to understand, have already been made by the African Troops' Division, and it is to conserve these and to penetrate over the hills and beyond the Road that we have been called to the Aisne.

"Sah! There will be a struggle, Americain. It is only the Iron Division can realise this. Well, I tell you, the *Chemin des Dames* is bound to go down in history. A greater abattoir it will be hard to find."

The bombardment blasts infernally along the entire sec-

tor. Youthful Teuton prisoners and wounded French form their usual procession, proceeding to the rear. Once more I come upon Felizé, and now he is a sergeant passing through Bourg et Comin with *papellards*\* for the "*Etat-Major*"† back in Longueval. He has such a hearty hand-clasp that these things alone in war seem to be worth while—friendships that survive brutality and lust if they survive death itself.

"How often I think of Ypres," says Felizé, a little sadly. "We were all together then, Parisot, you and me—the old Eighth. Now, it is over. The entire company, I heard, gone—you were the last remaining man. Americain, *j'en aié more*.‡ I wish the war were over."

"This maybe is the last offensive."

He says dully: "No, not this, nor the next, nor the next. We are in it to stay seven years, mark my words. Every *poilu* knows it: *l'Allemagne* is not so easily beaten down."

"I see you have stripes again."

"I will be a *sous-lieutenant* in June. I am in the report."

"Felizé, I congratulate you. *Bonne chance, bon succès! Mon frangin, good-bye!* ."

"Good-bye!"

We move on the 21st of April. We go through Verneuil. We take a location on the top of a hill, in reserve, overlooking Verneuil and Bourg et Comin beyond the valley on the one hand and the remnants of two destroyed villages on the other. These latter, the twin battlefields of a recent, magnificent slaughter, precede the present objective—the *Chemin des Dames*—by several kilos, gliding off in the distance to the German lines.

The 5th Company enters the first-line trenches of the Aisne on the 25th of April, 1917. Filing after is the 6th Company. The *boyau* leads through a stone quarry into a

\*Official papers—orders.

†Staff officers.

‡I am sick and tired of it.

*bois*,\* down a hill and then across an open space to the foot of a second hill, fearfully steep,—forming the present French emplacement.

“Pass over rapidly the open space, *mes enfants*,” cautions the captain. We leave the forest, rush down the hill and across in one bedlam, every man panting and dishevelled.

“*Eh bien . . .*”

Crrashh—whrroarr!

A seething inferno of shells splits in the death-trap behind us, catching the 6th Company and squarely ripping it open with cries and moans and shouts of the unfortunate victims! A barrage-fire is levelled with killing effect.

“Ah, God—let us get out of this!” Constant presses up the hill-side, scrambling and clutching. We issue into the lines and take up our emplacement.

With the first bud of day the situation becomes more definite. We are posted on a ridge of a hill with Fritz only a scant hundred metres distant. The *Chemin des Dames* is now visible, running parallel with the German position and fifty metres beyond. Our own slopes are the desolation of a cemetery of recent growth, and below this the criminal, the exposed, the morbid valley which we are to know as the “*Piste de la Mort*.”† It is not long, furthermore it is not wide, but it is sufficiently treacherous to claim its victims every day we are in the Aisne. To-day it is five, to-morrow fifteen, or, maybe, twenty! The toll is variable but never ending.

Alone is this path the connecting link with *ravitaillement*. No other is provided to the rear. We are forced daily to travel it, shuddering at its swamps a metre deep on either side, and its sinister heaps added to every day under Fritz's barrage. He has a habit of sending them over unswervingly every two minutes. This lends a slender chance to skip across, leaping the *maccabés*,‡ skittling alongside

\*Forest.

†Path of Death.

‡Dead men.

the fetid bogs as hungry as quicksand, and to forsake the fatal zone before another *rafale*.

The *boche* accuracy is another marvel that sets me thinking.

"*Panouille!*" shouts Constant, "You have the brains of a toto! Is it possible you do not see that Fritz held these lines before you or I and therefore knows them better? He has the exact range. It would be difficult to miss. See the valley below."

And sure enough it is filled with German shells—*marmites* of all calibres, which, having sped from here, have left their evidence below.

"*Ravitaillement* to-night, Americain," says André, who is my sergeant.

"Cristi! It is best to go while it is light?"

He nods.

We go off in squads, approaching the path and deciding to cross after every *rafale* in order. The first group starts over. Unfortunately at this exact instant a *corvée* of the 1st Battalion is returning. The two meet in the middle. Each hesitates to step out. It would be suicidal because of the morass spreading its grimed arms on either side.

"*Nom de Dieu!*"

We crouch back, hiding our heads. We know the verdict. It will be fatal!

Boom—boom—crrackk—whrroarr!

A tumultuous detonation shivers through the valley! The whole slope rocks. Bleeding bodies are thrown to left and right—splashed into the bog—sunken from sight! A bellow of pain leaps out of a throat . . . earth and flesh spin giddily! . . .

"*Ah, Dieu! Sacre nom d'un nom!*"

Several of our own crew are nauseated beyond measure. My eyes blind for an instant and a helpless, hysterical feeling swims over. I want to run—I—I—

"*Allez-vous-en—vite!*"\*

Pushed from behind, led on by others, I go—into the

\*Go—quick.

strip of Purgatory, between fragments of flesh . . . leaping, agonised and frensied . . . panting, gasping, strangling—onto the other side! . . .

Sweat oozes now from every pore,—faint dizziness envelops us all. We sway. We hesitate on the borders of that inferno while another *rafale* comes over, breathing in great lungfuls of air—overcoming our nausea.

Out of Verneuil is the *ravitaillement*. It is a long, cheerless journey. Hours later—in the grey of morning—we are back before the "*Piste*."\* The little heaps have grown larger. Bodies are even strewn to the foot of the slope. Laden like pack-animals, we stand undecided. One—two—four—six minutes—what has become of the *rafale*? Is there no more cannonading from Fritz?

"*Eh bien*, let us go!"

Six together, we leap out to cross.

Ah-ching—ching—ching—

"*Barre-toi de la!*" †

Whrroarr!

We are back in the *boyau*—all but the man who spoke, who is flat on his face in the road. A second time we essay the crossing, but this time directly after the barrage, scuttling like rats, and pulling up exhausted on the farther slope before our step-ladder emplacement.

The 5th of May thunders in. The 79th Infantry climbs the *parapet*, comes hand-to-hand with Fritz, advances as far as the *Chemin des Dames*, but is here pressed back by sudden numerically-superior forces. It is miserably apparent what has occurred: the Teuton East-Front Hordes, released by the Russian débacle just at this time, have transferred with all speed to the line from Rheims to Soissons—known in its entirety as the "*Secteur de l'Aisne*"‡—bolstering up the palpitant heart of the Western Theatre at this point. There is no doubt that a decisive break could have been accomplished and the German forces

\*Path.

†Move out of there!

‡Sector of the Aisne.

routed back to the Ardennes but for this unlucky Slavic stroke.

A steady shelling comes over from the enemy's lines. The 6th of May looms up burning hot with a blood-red sun and a strange, spangled cloud-effect. Soon after the wind starts to play in gusts about the emplacements. The sky over-shadows—blurs—turns black! A deluge of water cataracts out of the Heavens. It fills in the *boyaux*. Long streamers of it flow down the hill-sides into the valleys, bubbling and boiling. Our situation is bad. Without *guitounes*, without reserve rations or *sacs*—the latter having been taken from us on the Tilleuls above Verneuil, which is the first time, to my knowledge, this has been done in an infantry attack—hunger and dampness gnaw to the vitals and we are as miserable as wretches before the guillotine.

### *Attack of the Chemin des Dames*

At 13.00 o'clock the official order comes in: Ready to go over at 15 hours and 15 minutes (a quarter past three o'clock).

"What!" indignantly exclaims Constant. "Do they send us in without *jus*\* or *gnolet*† or *pinard*?"‡

"No *suplement*?"§

"To die with an empty stomach—that is tragic, *mes frangins!*"

"Ah, let us not leave the trenches!"

"*Metier de metier*—no *pinard*?"

And so it goes, each man having something to say—but nothing to do, of course, other than obey commands. A Frenchman cannot work without complaining.

Captain Vanino, our commander, addresses us with dignity:

\*Coffee.

†Brandy.

‡Wine.

§Sweet-meats.

"*Mes enfants*, let us not falter. The honour of the *patrie*. . . . If we rise to the glory of. . . . The 5th Company must uphold the reputation of the Iron Division, which. . . .—Therefore be ready,—*c'est pour la France!* . . ."

"*Nom de Dieu!*—where is the artillery?" the sergeant, André, complains. "Are we to go forward without artillery preparation, *mon capitaine?*"

"Nonsense! . . ."

"Suicide! . . ."

"Shall we, my friends, sacrifice our lives in a cause without hope of success? *Non, mes frangins, non, Non, NON!*"

Other exclamations are not long in forthcoming, but at 15:15, true to the traditions of the 20th Corps d'Armée, every *poilu* has his *bayonette au canon*, his eyes to the front. In silence, marked intensely for its unaccustomed presence, *nous grimpons le parapet!*\*

Choppy explosions break out all along the line—settle into a thrum! The German machine-guns are in action. Slight whistling shrieks denote the passage of bullets, far overhead as their range carries too high. The silence is broken thus far but no farther. We advance upon the entanglements. . . .

"*On les aura, mes copains,—on les—aura!*"†

Heaving the grenades into the air, they go smashing in—tearing, detonating, slashing to left and right! A mumbled response comes out of the Teuton trenches,—cries, groans, instant action, and vomiting grenades!—they are exchanging them man for man. Our *sous-lieutenant* goes out. Our *caporal* reels, choking his life out with a great ghastly hole in his chest.

"*Suivez-moi!*"‡

At the heels of Vanino we leap into the trench.

"*Kamerads Franzose, nix capout.* . . ."

A surrendering line of *boches*, herded among swimming débris, whine with upraised palms. We knock them right

\*We climb the *parapet*—the French "Over the Top."

†We get them.

‡Follow me.

and left, scrambling, roaring over, past the *parados*, past dead and dying, toward—the—*Chemin des Dames*——!

"*Suivez, mes enfants!*"

The field breaks with churning shells! Clouds of sooty smoke roll over, darkening the battlefield like a huge morass. Forward—the Ladies' Road, emanating in patches from between the billowing veil,—is a thunder of flames from our own artillery. The *boche* batteries blaze into the valley. . . .

C-thung—whrroarr—whrroarr—rr!

Boom—whang!

"*On les au— . . .*"

Against the second entanglements a barrage of fire stops our further advance. We drop into shell-holes. Overhead *tromblons*\* and machine-gun bullets ply their dismal trade. The 5th Company replies with rifles from the pits.

"Sah! What is that?"

Constant sniffs two or three times.

"Liquid fire!"

A heavy odour of petroleum comes over.

"*Bande de vaches!* We give it to them good!"

He fires rapidly, loading in grenades. Our next neighbour—a boy—is pierced in the shoulder—leaps up with a shriek! . . .

André roars: "To the rear!" and the boy starts back, his eyes rolling, head lolling to and fro,—dragging himself by his hands, fingers clutching the turf. The barrage closes in. Behind, in the flaming valley, are fresh troops waiting to come to our assistance—unable to advance. Before, are liquid-fire containers—dark-grey boxes the width of a man, strapped to the backs of the German *genie* and spraying inflammation into the air! Acrid gas, *arrivés*, rifle-bullets and grenades—a medley of deadly instruments—wing over. The field becomes an inferno!

"*Dieu!* We cannot go back—we cannot advance—we

\*Grenades fired from rifles;—resting in a chalice-shaped contrivance at the end of the barrel, the cartridge carries it out. Small shells, designated as "W.Bs," are also used for this purpose.

are caught! Like rats in a trap,—we are lost—l-o-s-t! *Planquez ta trogne!*\* screams Constant,—“*Mon Dieu!*”

A deafening burst of shrapnel overhead rains slugs like a leaden army about our ears! The grenades split with a painful, thudding jar! Everywhere the air is vibrating with monstrous concussions.

Two metres ahead and to the left is the sergeant, André. A dense column of smoke billows up to the right, black as pitch and heavy with coal-tar smell. It circles, streams,—gathering momentum. Shrieks and nerve-racking human whimpers arise through the uproar.

“What is it? Ah, God—the fire! *Regarde!*” He leaps up and points, hysterical with fright. “*Regardez, mes copains*, they burn us alive! They burn. . . .”

The thick column breaks, wafted by the wind—pours toward us—envelopes, hides—sails past—leaves us choking and grovelling in the pit.

“*Regardez . . . Ah—ha—ha!*—they roast! See them . . . Ah—ha . . . cooking, *mes copains, voyez . . . Ah—ha—ha!*” André’s crazy laughter, morbid with terror, peals out. He screams—he shouts—he guffaws—his helmet whirls up insanelly—he gurgles, sinks and dies, shot through the brain!

“Americain—*mon Dieu!*—did you see?!” Constant blubbers like a girl. “Married four weeks. . . . Americain, what shall we do—they are retreating. . . .—tears of Christ!”

A fourth jet of fire spews to the left. Three flare on the right, the wind veering their smoke and exposing them plainly. The flames leap up a metre or more from the nozzle of their hoses, spraying back and forth, up and down, washing with the tongues of Cerberus the unhappy *poilus* before them. Emanating gaseous, they ignite—flare—cata-pult forward, their slender necks extending fifteen metres in greedy rapacity—contacting the “*bleu horizon*,” incinerating it—charring it! No power can quench these

\*Duck your head.

demons; no hand—once exposed to the air—smother their virulent breath!

The black offal spreads over the heavens like a mourning veil, blotting light and sight from this unholy scene.

"Americain . . . what shall we do . . . retreat? . . ."

The fifth of the *genie* leaps over his *parapet* directly before us, grey-black box to shoulder, nozzle in hand.

"*Tonnerre de . . . Never!*"

Constant levels his rifle, fed with a *tromblon*—trembles—steadies himself and fires—not a moment too soon!

An unearthly shriek passes over the terrain! The whole mighty, blazing flood pours out, stabs the sky, spreading red-hot, purgatorial doom among its perpetrators! The explosion of the grenade has ripped open the man—the death-box—contacts it in one huge, cataclysmic riot! He vanishes into ashes.

The heat from this blazing turret becomes so intense we feel it smoulder in the atmosphere of the shell-pit.

"Well, then, it is 'get out.' We will have to move, my friend."

My *copain* clasps my hand and then releases it and starts out perfectly certain he will never reach the rear. He crawls along, flat-bellied, and I parallel with him, a metre over. The air is suffocating,—acrid with poison and tangy with smoke. *Marmites* are spitting wind; shells rebreak the pathetic, sky-bluish corpses. We part to skirt a *poilu*, face upward, staring into smoke, a round, leaden hole in his throat and another in his shoulder, bleeding-red,—the last soldier André ever commanded, the young boy he ordered to the rear!

At twenty-five metres my *copain* rises to his feet, stooped-over, and commences to run. I rise and follow after him. . . . A shell screams . . .

"*Planquez!*"

Too late to stop myself, I go headlong over his body and into a deep crater! The shell explodes,—volumes of earth, water and fragments pound the top of my helmet, and my

nerves into a jelly. Fifteen more metres remain before the trenches.

"Do you come?" I crawl out of the shell-pit, calling backward, and clamber to the lines. The stretch is humming like a high metallic wire with bullets.

My *copain*, I imagine, is behind me. I feel his hand on my arm.

"Well, we are back, Constant," I say. "I would never have believed it!" I turn to him: "Here we are in the trench—*mon Dieu!* where is he? Constant? . . ."

The other boys are looking at me: "What is it?" above the turmoil.

"Raoul Constant—behind me——"

They look around, at me, at each other.

The German counter-attack starts. The *boches* swarm over the bedemoned plain—they leave a trail of broken corpses and mangled men in their wake. They stream up—the 75s speak—they stream back in full retreat! The field dots splendidly—a whole army fertilising its chest! The terrain shakes—the powder clouds roll—the dead men weep.

At twilight the whole pot simmers—French and Germans rest on arms. A reorganisation of our sector is begun. *Maccabés*, lifted over the *parapet*, are lowered *entre les lignes*. A gentle, sibilant breeze wafts over and the night drops. Leaning against the *creneau* I feel a burning pain in my head—a sensation of dullness, strange mental inertia. What is it that persists in eluding me? A moment—two—in the afternoon's chaotic splendour? . . .

Something speaks over the *parapet*—moans. Speaks again—murmurs.

A thought startles me with full force!

Disregarding everything, I hoist up to the level and peer out, summon a *poilu*, and we drag at the shoulders until we have our man inside.

"Constant? . . ."

A mutter. I turn my rescued one over and see—it is a *boche*. The *poilu* looks at me strangely.

Our lieutenant is summoned and he whispers in German:  
"*Wo sind sie Verwundet?*"\*

"*In der Huefte. Ich lag im Felde vierundzwanzig Stunden, die ganze Nacht im Regen.*"†

I rob a dead man to feed the *boche*. I dress his thigh and he groans, and then the *brancardiers*‡ take him away.

The second counter-attack is launched within an hour. Teuton batteries hammer the left and right wings of our horse-shoe defences with tireless energy. The valley quakes; desperate shivers go through it with the thud—thud—thud of impacting shells—torture of their concussions! Our own batteries raise a cadenza. The Heavens choke . . . vomit . . .

A light flares over the landscape, bringing into sudden prominence our lines and those of the enemy.

I light a *seche*. . . .

\*Where are you wounded?

†In the thigh. I lay in the field twenty-four hours—the whole night in the rain.

‡Stretcher-bearers.

## IX

### LORRAINE

SAN FRANCISCO,  
2 Novembre 1917

Dear Mr. Lewys,—

B—— told me before leaving Nancy that you intend to publish the book, making literature out of my memos. In that case you will want the balance.

The second German attack failed in the *Chemin des Dames*. *Boche* attacks have a habit of doing this lately on the Western Front, as you probably know by reading the M——, which prints so much of the truth! It was the —th Army Corps carried the *Chemin des Dames* finally, but the Iron Division paved the way as I describe. I would include this in the book. They are there to stay with the help of God! I regret I could not have been there at the climax, but they withdrew us after the second counter-attack and before we could see it through.

I'll tell you how it is, *mon vieux*, the deputies were kicking. Most of the boys from Paris are in our corps and the losses were too heavy. "*Nom d'un chien*, let the southern provinces contribute—why should all the blood flow out of Paris?" That is the kind of racket went up in the Chamber of Deputies in May of 19—. Our colonel told me confidentially that 35,000 men went through the 20th Army Corps in three years, which is to say they wiped us clean out of existence! But the reinforcements kept up—the constant filling-in closed the gaps and the *Division de Fer de Toul et Nancy* is as good as it ever was. But the blood has been spilled—no getting away from that. The biggest offensive division in the French Army has lost all of its original material. They threw us in too often. They saved

their other regiments at our expense. Now the shoe is on the other foot—they are sparing the 20th all in a bunch. Amaury Durand writes me they have been resting in Nomeny (Lorraine) ever since I left, which was in October. The American troops are there now.

That reminds me: we had a demonstration before the first American officers in July—the 29th—in the *Camp de Bois l'Eveque* between Toul and Nancy. At nine in the morning it started, artillery, machine-guns, liquid fire, grenades, gas, everything. The only difference from a real attack was the absence of the enemy. They saw us all through,—when it was over gave us *suplement*, and we went fishing with grenades. If you throw them into the Meurthe the explosion brings the fish to the top of the water. Great sport, only the *Ministre de Guerre* forbade it. That makes no difference, the boys do it just the same.

After that second attack of the Germans in the *Chemin des Dames* we came down to Braisne. We rested there a few days and I got in my notes, but only as far as you have them. Then—just at that instant, when a really fine bombardment was in progress and the rockets were budding—somebody clapped me on the back and said: "Hola, Americain, I go on *permission* to Paris!"

This was too good an opportunity to miss. I seized him and asked him if he could find his way in Paris.

"*Mais, oui!*—what do you think,—I know it better as you!"

That ended the matter. He must certainly know it well! I said: "Bras-Cassés, you find this party and when you are sure you have him, give him this." That was the packet. Well, we know the rest—of course, you have it. Bras-Cassés reported to me in Nancy, as I have said. By the way, I ought to explain—we call them "Bras-Cassés," the stretcher-bearers,—a corruption of *brancardiers*, because they have broken arms, we say, or they would fight like men!

Bras-Cassés was surprised to find you in such a position of . . .

After Braisne, where we got our first bath of the season, swimming under Teuton bombs, raining down like cocoanuts out of the aeros—they got 15 of our boys in one flour-mill one evening!—we went to Plessier Huleu.

Here the sergeant-major read out one morning from the report:

"The soldiers whose names follow will receive the *Croix de Guerre* at the next review,—

"François Xavier —.

"Pierre Bertrand.

"Jules Raveneau.

"Raoul Constant.

"Louis Larnes," etc., etc.

Constant immediately shrilled:

"Pooh! You can keep the *Croix de Guerre*—as long as it is not the *Croix de Bois*,\* I am satisfied!"

At that everybody laughed and the rest of the report went for nothing.

Mr. Lewys, the surprise of my life was in Braisne—Constant came back! Please correct in my manuscript,—my *copain* was not killed. He had his head scratched and the *poste de secours* fixed him up with plaster easily enough. It was a wonderful thing—somehow I felt he was not dead in the emplacement. He is in Saloniki now. I have a letter.

Constant got his *Croix* when I did—in Chamagnes in the Vosges, June 17th. It was quite a ceremony, but, sad to say, the *Croix* is not worth it! Too many unworthies wear it. You see them everywhere, and the real heroes put them away in their *sacs* or send them home, and then when a review is ordered and the boys instructed to put on their decorations, several will not do so and the result is a dose of prison. This is not right. Either make a decoration a restricted and worthy thing or else excuse the genuine boys from wearing it. I don't believe in dishonouring the hand of the State.

If you care for an outline of the ceremony, it is this:  
The battalion is lined up for the review. The com-

\*Wooden Cross.

*mandant* rides his horse in the usual manner up and down, "*La Musique*" stands at one end, blaring out the *Marseillaise*, while the captain-adjutant of the battalion rides after and tries to keep up with his chief. Then the *greffier*,\* a lieutenant generally, steps out and calls our names, and we line up embarrassedly until the superiors dismount, advance, pin the decorations to our palpitating breasts, shake our limp hands, and remark: "You are decorated with the *Croix de Guerre* in the name of the *République Française*." The music blares *Sambre et Meuse*, we steal back to our places, and the battalion marches and disbands.

We are decorated!

We have been in the service of our country two years and a half and are still alive—and, therefore, should be rewarded. Now, is this so great an achievement in the face of all those who perished? Pah! You can see the fallacy of it—either a man dies for the sake of his principle, or he lives and the principle marches on. The dead are decorated with the *Croix de Bois*; the live with the *Croix de Guerre*.

The 12th of July, 1917, at ten in the morning, we arrived in Nancy. Now the Iron Division was at home once more after three years of fighting. Each company had its own flag—ours, a green-and-red with gold letters, denoting the battles in which the battalion had engaged:

### COURONNÉ DE NANCY

*Ypres, Arras, Champagne, Verdun, Somme, Chemin des Dames*

This was quite a record! The townspeople went wild. Such a demonstration has rarely been seen. Can you imagine it?—parading through the streets, rifle on shoulder, cheering, screaming throngs to right and left, before and behind, wherever possible! The bands gave out their share of the racket of the moment, and we came in for food, wine and tobacco and chocolates.

\*Secretary of the battalion.

But the "*Bastille*" we celebrated in Moivron. We marched there in the dead of night, but in a warmth such as only the Vosges can stand in this season. There was no celebration outside, but inwardly—cristi! friend Lewys, it poured all day—inside! We made a thorough-going clean-out of Moivron so not a bottle remained. We got on the march, we marched all night, we passed villages full of troops all celebrating with phonographs and *poules* and litres of *pinard*. In short, the holiday was universally well-drunk. It is no use talking, a Frenchman cannot fight or live or love without wine, and any notion of excluding it—which seems to be talk in the capital here—would be tommyrot, of course. Please distinctly say this where you can in my memos. The fact should be made clear. Especially the heads in America ought to know it if they do not.

We took the sector in the Lorraine from the *Territorials*.

"Easy work here, boys,—no trouble at all. You only watch the road at night." The old fellows told us this.

"Where are the trenches?"

"Oh, don't worry about them. They are in the wood. But here it is unnecessary."

Well, what a funny sector! We looked about for the explanation. It is this:

Bordering the *Bois de la Fourrace* was a road. On the other side of this road were the entanglements leading down to the river. On the other side of the river was a hill. On the other side of the hill was Fritz! Before the declaration of war, you see, the river Seille was our frontier along these parts, so nobody was disturbed and the enemy as well as ourselves were very much at home on our own soil. Furthermore, it seems apparent nobody is particularly desirous of starting anything in Lorraine. The *boches* stay on their side of the fence; we, on ours,—both sides perfectly content to rest on arms. In this way we are but a kilometre and a half removed from the enemy but as safe as one would be in a drawing-room at home. Any one can picnic in the *bois*—in fact, at Nomeny, three kilos back,

women and children rake hay in the fields, vegetables and cabbages. The whole arrangement is like a resort in California, the woods team with berries, the *Bois de la Trappe* is to the right. On the other hand, Château Salins is also there, just a bit further removed—but it is the first city in German Lorraine.

No *guitounes* were built in the sector. It is unnecessary. Two cannon-shots daily is the passage of hostilities. One goes back two hundred metres to the kitchens. It is therefore eat and sleep and keep the lines,—but don't fight or you may kill somebody!

I was badly delayed in getting my *permission* for San Francisco. The application was in July, but months later it was still: "Wait, Americain, your papers cannot be signed before the 1st of October."

"Why not?"

"*C'est militaire il ne faut pas chercher à comprendre!*"

That is it! In military circles one must not seek to understand—anything! Do—don't think; obey—don't question; go—come—die, worm, wretch! But if you try to comprehend—the *bon Dieu* alone preserve you. . . .

Dear Mr. Lewys, I fully understand your impatience with me at this stage. You are thinking: "Cannot this *poilu* stop philosophising and giving us his opinions? Actions—not opinions——!"

*Mon Dieu!*—you are right!

I left Faulx for Nancy; I left Nancy for Paris; I left Paris for Bordeaux; I left Bordeaux on the Steamship *Chicago*, the identical one I went abroad in three years before. We had no torpedoing—I am sorry to disappoint you. We neither saw nor imagined a periscope, which I understand so many travellers have a habit of doing. We did carry the crews of two torpedoed American ships, however, the *Campana* and the *Grace*, and brought them safely in.

The idea of arriving on American soil in a French uniform was rather terrifying had I known it. They minced and mouthed over me—congratulated me and spun a fine

web over my extraordinary valour, notwithstanding I did not don my *Croix* for the delectation of all the worshipful. I came straight to San Francisco. There was a good deal of money spent on the route for refreshment and comforts. I did not spend it! In Chicago a recruiting sergeant introduced me to some French citizens formerly of Arras.

"Ah, *m'sieu*, do you know Neuville St. Vaast?—that beautiful . . ."

"What is left of it, *oui, madame*."

"Left of it?"

"*Certainement*."

"How is that?"

"I know at least fifty of the fifteen thousand men who lie buried in its ruins."

"Ruins?—*mon Dieu!*"

"Ruins, *madame*. There never were finer ruins,—except those in La Targette! My friend, Parisot, used to say——"

"There is nothing standing unblemished of Neuville St. Vaast? Impossible! You jest! Neuville . . ."

And so it goes.

No one is willing to believe that the east of France is really a desolate waste; and, knowing further that I will be taken for a liar and *mariolle* wherever I go—regardless of the affection these Americans seem to have for the "*Bleu Horizon!*"—why, I say nothing, where I can help it. I tell them neither that I have faced gas nor liquid fire nor Fritz in Ypres, Arras, the Champagne, Verdun, the Somme, Aisne, or Lorraine; I leave that all for you to do, *mon vieux!* Every word in those notes of mine is true, so help me Heaven! and any one having cause to doubt has never been on the front!

War is not a pleasure, or a necessity,—*it is a curse!*

I have had thirty-two months of it—my government decrees I must go back into the abattoir, which all governments are decreeing—therefore not one is any wiser than the other. I shall go!

Meanwhile, I arrived and betook myself to my home,

where my wife and two tots were waiting—but not for me! They did not know I was a *permissionnaire*. They were waiting for a letter from their *père* in France. . . .

I rang the bell. My wife opened the door. She saw my light blue uniform and took me for the postman.

She said: "Any mail to-day?"

I responded: "No, Elice, but I am here myself!"

—*Votre correspondant*, . . . . .

FRANÇOIS.

## X

### POILU SLANG AND FRENCH EXPRESSIONS

#### A

*abri*, a dugout or trench residence.  
*amoché*, wounded.  
*andouille*, stupid—an epithet.  
*arrivée*, a German shell.  
*as de carreau*, knapsack.  
*avions de chasse*, pursuit biplanes.  
*azor*, another name for knapsack.

#### B

*babillarde*, letter.  
*bande de vaches*, literally: band of cows, an epithet.  
*bandes moletières*, wrappings for the legs, a poilu's leggings.  
*bachot*, bed.  
*banquette de tir*, elevated bank of earth in a trench to stand and fire from.  
*barre toi* or *barre toi de la*, get out of the way.  
*bidoche*, meat.  
*bidon*, canteen.  
*binette*, face.  
*bistro*, a drinking-house.  
*boche*, German soldier.  
*bôte de singe*, literally a box of monkeys—1 lb. of canned meat.  
*boucle la lourde*, close the door.  
*bouffer le pisenlit par les racines*, eat the salad by the roots, a buried man.  
*bouziller*, to kill.  
*boyau*, communicating trench.  
*boyau d'évacuation*, trench for removal of wounded.  
*brancardiers*, stretcher-bearers.  
*bras-cassés*, corruption of *brancardiers*, meaning literally broken-arms.  
*bricheton*, bread.

#### C

*cabot*, corruption of *caporal*, literally toy-dog.  
*cachibi*, another name for dugout or trench residence.  
*cafard*, the blues.  
*caisson*, a large wagon carrying supplies.  
*calbombe*, lamp.  
*camion*, a French motor-lorrie

*capote*, *poilu's* overcoat.  
*carafé*, literally a decanter, slang for head.  
*c'est moche*, it looks rotten.  
*chenilles*, caterpillars, a name for single-lights in strings.  
*chic*, nobby, stylish.  
*claboter*, to die.  
*copain*, friend and pal.  
*crapouillois*, small aerial torpedoes.  
*creneau*, shooting-hole in the parapet.  
*croquenots*, shoes.  
*croûte*, food.  
*culasse*, breech-block of a rifle, or cannon.

## D

*débine-toi*, beat it.  
*défiler à l'ours* or *défiler en tôle*, go to prison.  
*départ*, a French shell.  
*donne-moi de la flotte* or *un quart de flotte*, give me some water.  
*donne-moi du riffle*, give me a light (for a cigarette, etc.)  
*Dieu or Mon Dieu or Nom de Dieu or En nom Dé*, God, Name of God, etc.

## E

*échelon*, small wagon or train of wagons carrying machine-guns.  
*En avant! C'est pour la France!* Forward! It is for France!  
*épatante*, cute, pretty, fashionable.  
*espèce d'abruti*, numbskull—an epithet.  
*espèce d'andouille*, fool, stupid—an epithet.  
*état-major*, staff officers.

## F

*falzaré*, pants.  
*ferme ta boîte* or *ferme ton égout*, shut up!  
*flancher*, to give up.  
*flotte*, water.  
*fourbi*, mixture of everything.  
*fout le camp au diable*, go to the devil!  
*frangin*, brother-in-arms.  
*frichii*, food.  
*Fritz*, German soldier or army collectively.  
*fusée*, head of a shell.  
*fusée blanche*, ordinary colourless rocket.  
*fusée éclairante*, star-shell, flare-shell, rocket, Bengal fire.  
*fusil*, rifle.

## G

*gamelle*, tin-pan for food, part of equipment.  
*gerbe*, bouquet of lights, generally signal for barrage.  
*gnole*, brandy.  
*godasses*, another name for shoes.  
*gonzesse*, girl, lady-love, sweetheart.  
*grimper le parapet*, climb the *parapet*, the French "over the top."  
*guitoune*, another name for dugout or trench residence.

## I

*il a le cafard*, he has the blues.  
*il est bouzillé*, he is killed.  
*il est moins cinq*, it missed you by an inch.  
*il grille une sèche*, he smokes a cigarette.  
*il n'a pas la trouille*, he has no fear.  
*il ne faut pas s'en faire*, never worry.  
*ils s'engueulent*, they argue.

## J

*je crois qu'on pourra numéroté les abatis*, I think you better  
 number your legs, i. e., you will be blown apart.  
*je l'engueule*, I argue.  
*je n'ai rien à bouffer or boulloter*, I have nothing to eat.  
*j'en ai mare*, I am sick and tired of it.  
*je suis fauché*, I am broke, money-less.  
*jus*, coffee.

## L

*lance-pierre*, literally stone-thrower, slang for rifle.  
*liquette*, shirt.  
*litre*, a quart measure of anything.  
*lisense chien*, literally dog-license, identification tag.  
*louftingue dingo*, crazy-nut.

## M

*maccabé*, dead man.  
*marches par un*, march by one, i. e., single-file.  
*margolette*, another name for face.  
*mariolle*, a bluffer.  
*marmite*, another name for a German shell, literally sauce-pan.  
*mes enfants*, my children, a form of address from officer to  
 soldiers.  
*mitrailleuse*, a machine-gun.  
*mome*, same as *gonzesse*, i. e., lady-love, sweetheart, girl.  
*morlingue*, pocket-book.  
*musette*, canvas bag for reserve food, fork and spoon, part of  
 equipment.

## N

*nauge de gaz*, gas-cloud.  
*numérote tes abatis, mon vieux*, number your legs, my old friend.

## O

*On les Aura!* we get them, meaning the boches—a battle-cry of  
 France.

## P

*pannards*, feet.  
*panouille*, stupid—an epithet.  
*papellards*, official papers, orders.

*parados*, the rear wall of a trench.  
*parapet*, the top part of a front trench.  
*perlot*, tobacco.  
*permissionnaire*, a man of leave, soldier on furlough.  
*pied de chou*, literally foot-of-a-cabbage—an epithet.  
*pinard*, wine.  
*pion-pion*, French "Tommy Atkins."  
*planque ta trogne*, down with your head.  
*planquez-vous*, duck, get down, squat, flatten.  
*plaque d'identité*, identification tag.  
*poignon*, money.  
*poilu*, literally a hairy man, France's nickname for her sons.  
*poltron*, coward.  
*pompes*, another name for shoes.  
*poste d'ecoute*, listening-post.  
*poste de secours*, first-aid station.  
*poule*, literally chicken, applied to lively girls or sweethearts.  
*pour rallonger le tir*, for ranging the fire.  
*punaises*, literally bed-bugs, applied to lentils, small flat army beans.

## Q

*quart*, a tin cup, measuring  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a litre.

## R

*rabiot*, left-over food.  
*ragoût de bœuf*, beef-stew, the principal army dish.  
*ravitaillement*, food supplies, food service.  
*ripations*, another name for feet.  
*rosalie*, facetious name for bayonet.

## S

*sac*, knapsack.  
*sac au dos*, knapsack on the back.  
*sardines*, stripes, denoting ranks in army, etc.  
*sauté le parapet*, jump the parapet, "over the top."  
*seche*, cigarette.  
*suivez-moi*, follow me.  
*syphon*, another name for head.

## T

*tartines*, another name for shoes.  
*tiens!* harken, listen.  
*tocarde*, watch.  
*toutbibe*, nickname for doctor.  
*tranche*, also used for head.  
*trogne*, also used for head.  
*troquet*, another name for drinking-house.

## U

*une balle m'a rase les tiffes*, a cartridge "burned my hair."

*uniform de fantasia*, dress uniform.

*un train de plaisir*, a pleasure-train, i.e., whistling shell.

## V

*voyez*, look, see.

\* \* \*

## CORPS AND DIVISION COMMANDERS

## Army Corps (23,040)

Division (11,520)		Division (11,520)	
Brigade (5,760)		Brigade (5,760)	
Regiment (2,880)		Regiment (2,880)	
Batt. (960)	Batt. (960)	Battalion (960)	
Company (240)		Co. (240)	Co. (240)
Sec. (60)	Sec. (60)	Sec. (60)	Section (60)
Half-Section (30)		Half-Sec. (30)	
Escouade (15)		Escouade (15)	

Soldat (1)

\* \* \*

*Soldat* (Private).

*Caporal* (Corporal) commands an *Escouade*.

*Sergeant* (Sergeant) commands a *Half-Section*.

*Sous-Lieutenant* (Junior Lieutenant) commands a *Section*.

*Lieutenant* (First Lieutenant) commands a *Section*.

*Capitaine* (Captain) commands a *Company*.

*Commandant* (Major) commands a *Battalion*.

*Colonel* (Colonel) commands a *Regiment*.

*General de Brigade* (Brig. Gen'l) commands a *Brigade*.

*General de Division* (Major-Gen'l) commands a *Division*.

*General de Corps d'Armée* (Lieut.-Gen'l) commands a *Corps*.

\* \* \*

## METRIC SYSTEM OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

\* \* \*

<i>French</i>		<i>English</i>
1 litre . . . . .		1 quart
$\frac{1}{2}$ litre . . . . .		1 pint
1 quart . . . . .		$\frac{1}{2}$ pint

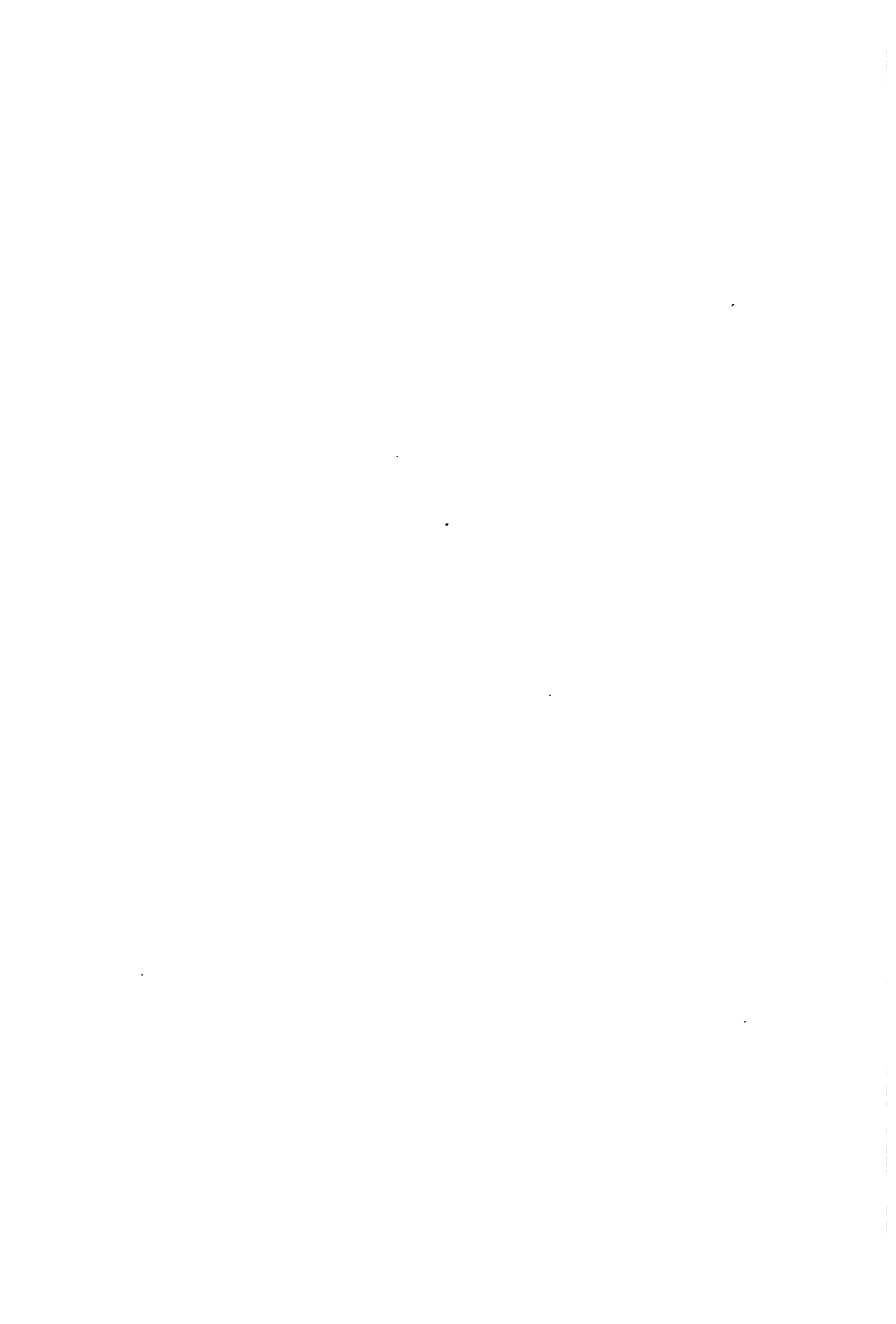
\* \* \*

$2\frac{1}{2}$ cmt . . . . .	1 inch
30 cmt . . . . .	1 foot
90 cmt . . . . .	1 yard
1 m. . . . .	1 yard, 5 in.
1 klm. 610 m. . . . .	1 mile

\* \* \*

1 sou. . . . .	1 cent
1 franc . . . . .	20 cents
5 francs . . . . .	1 dollar

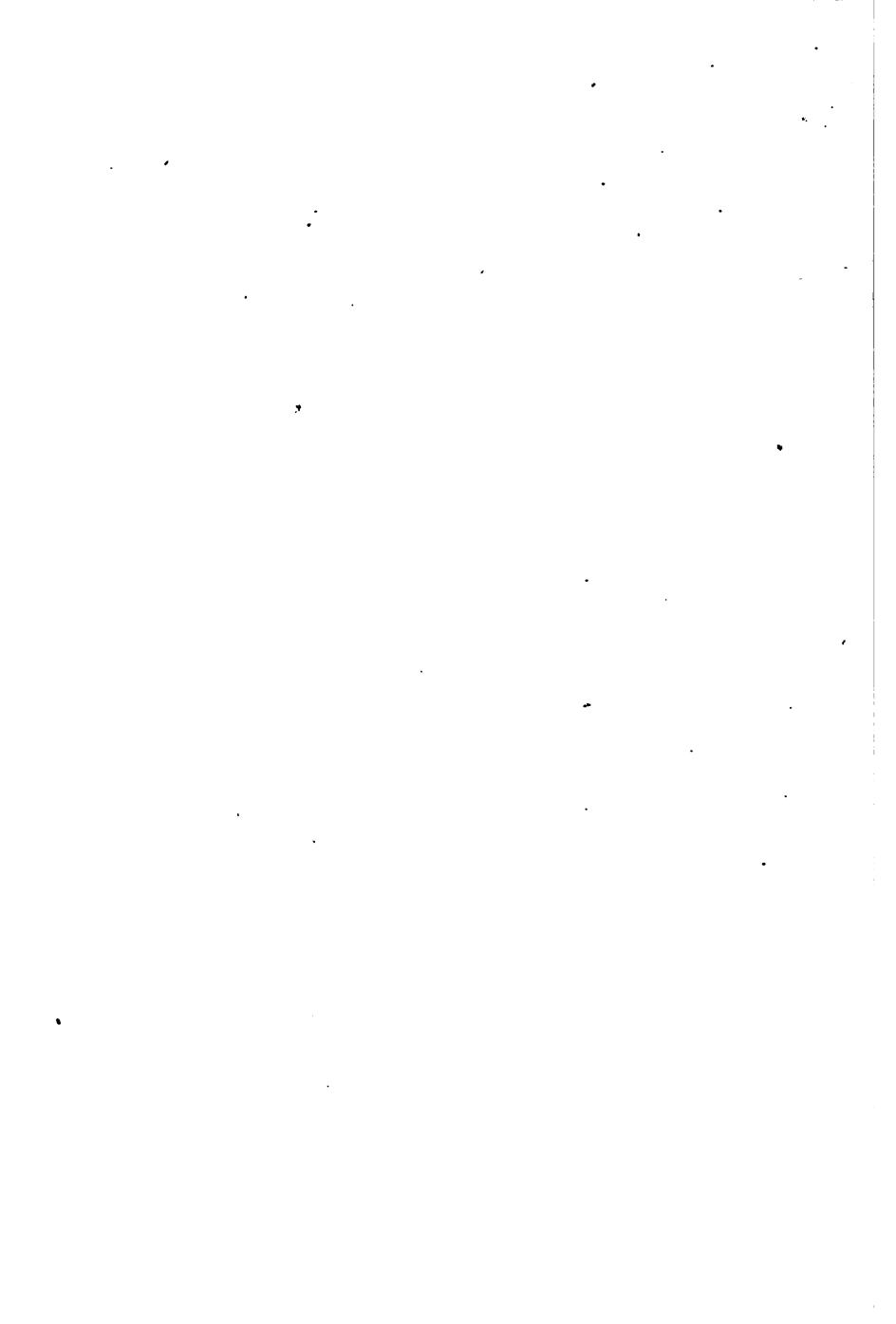












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